Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education is an academic forum for the study of teaching and pedagogy that focuses on the relationship between education and its socio-cultural context. Drawing upon a variety of contextualizing disciplines including cultural studies, curriculum theorizing, feminist studies, the social foundations of education, critical pedagogy, multi/interculturalism, queer theory, and symbolic interactionism, Taboo is grounded on the notion of “radical contextualization.” The journal encourages papers from a wide range of contributors who work within these general areas. As its title suggests, Taboo seeks compelling and contro-versial submissions.


The annual subscription rate for individuals is $50 US and for institutions is $100 US; for addresses outside the United States add $30 per year. Single issues are available for $30 each. Subscriptions orders should be addressed and payable to Caddo Gap Press, 3145 Geary Boulevard PMB 275, San Francisco, California 94118, USA. See subscription form on page 4.

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Articles, contributions, and editorial correspondence should be sent electronically to Dr. Shirley R. Steinberg, Senior Editor, Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education at <msgramsci@aol.com> or <shirley.steinberg@mcgill.ca>.

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From the Editor

Shirley Steinberg

I am sure you have all been waiting for this issue. Circumstances held up publication, requiring me again to implore you to inform your peers and students to consider subscribing to Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education. New times have brought on financial constraints and it becomes more and more difficult to maintain the quality of our journal without a larger number of subscribers. We are asking all who publish in the journal to subscribe to it—in this effort we have tried to keep the costs the same since the founding of the journal. We are pleased to announce that Taboo has become one of the first journals to be indexed on Google Scholar. This indexing should result in a substantial increase in “hits” for the journal and citations of the authors published. All previous issues are being indexed, and the online version will be published one year after the appearance of the original issues in order to keep the paper publication of Taboo viable.

This issue is particularly valuable, encompassing articles from a variety of perspectives and authors. We are especially appreciative to the contributors who have given us richness for this issue. The next three issues will be thematic in nature: the Spring/Summer 2007, coming out as soon as possible, will be dedicated to Critical Pedagogy, and the radical love/research/pedagogy of scholar Jesus Gomez; the Fall/Winter 2007 issue will focus on media studies, Canadian media in particular; and the Spring/Summer 2008 will be a special issue on Womanist Pedagogy. It is exciting to have invited distinguished and accomplished colleagues edit special issues of Taboo, and we continue to solicit proposals for future such issues.

Taboo is a peer refereed journal, with an acceptance rate of between 2% and 10%. Our pieces are blind reviewed, and are reviewed by a minimum of two reviewers each. It has been interesting to follow our Taboo articles and find that many have been cited by numerous sources, including articles that were published in our infant days a decade ago.

We appreciate the eyes that fall upon these pages, as you, dear readers, are the
key to the continuation of Taboo. Enjoy this issue, and may you be filled with peace and commitment to the social justice we so sorely need in our personal, public, and political lives.

Sincerely,
—Shirley R. Steinberg,
Senior Editor
After-Lifelong Learning:
A Eulogium

Kedrick James & Stephen Petrina

“In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy”
(W. Blake, Marriage of Heaven and Hell)

Good mourning. Lifelong Learning (Li’L) is dead. Of humble origins, Li’L lived ironically fast and died, hard and young. In thirty short years, Li’L became an executive, earning an unrivalled pedigree and modeling the preferred lifestyle of the maturing student. The illegitimate lovechild of neoliberal policies seeking to manage and mobilize human resources by extending the scope of education from womb to tomb, Li’L was bona fide and brazen. The stakes were high; competition in the global marketplace depends in no small degree on the value it places on upgrading the ‘wetware’ of its workforce through universal, recurrent education-for-all, just-in-time, right-now, on demand and online all-the-time, 24-7. This effort to extend shelf life, revive re/productivity, and boost efficiencies only minimally pays off while the almighty dollar sign prices the smallest measurable, infinitesimal unit of (academic) achievement. So-called technological sophistication and the knowledge economy converge to provide limitless opportunities wherein l/earners l/earn, and non-l/earners pay, day in, day out, perinatal to post-mortem. Li’L leveraged international political support, and educators anxiously documented and promoted her famed run at success. But poor Li’L had run her course, either ran out of curriculum or could not keep up, and passed away with sunken visions and empty dreams. Some say she burned out, while others argue the addictions accompanying her baby-boomer birth left her destined for brain drugs and the streets. Most agree that her final fate was predictable: Li’L was eventually trapped in a scandalous network of fraud and corruption, both victim and perpetrator of a massive learning scam blown open by the BBC and British tabloids in 2001. Whatever the case, the school of hard knocks took its toll while Li’L gambled and died disillusioned.

This, then, is the story of Li’L, as we have heard it told. We deconstructed it for an academic audience, retaining the fidelity of the story as a faction, a portman-
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team of fact and fiction.3 Faction, it would appear, is stranger than both fiction and truth. Indeed, some may object and claim that we deconstructed Li’L to a fetish, a
crack reification of an honorable, timeless idea; a gross characterization of a concept immemorial. Others might object and argue that Li’L was never more than a very
dubious fact of life; a mere fabrication of educational managers desperate for new
markets. Taking advice from Latour, we suggest that Li’L herself is neither eternal
nor fashionable; neither fact, nor fetish; rather, Li’L is factish.4 We explain Li’L’s rise
from humble beginnings to world-wide phenomenon; from noble cause to corruption;
from perinatal travail to afterlife travel. In the final examination, we remind readers
that Li’L lived fast, failed, and died hard. One ending to the story is that even with a
cast of characters—from the decent to the deceitful—Li’L could not keep up with
the curriculum. The proliferation of information, knowledge, and wisdom exhausted
Li’L and condemned or sentenced the rest of us to Li’L’s fate.5 Another ending is that
hubris weakened Li’L to the point of futility. Li’L fell victim to the miscalculation
that ‘learning’ could provide an answer to the question waiting at the last post: after
lifelong learning, then what? Or, afterlifelong learning, now what?

The Life and Times of Lifelong Learning

Li’L was born in 1972, in a UNESCO think-tank directed by Edgar Faure. Initially nicknamed Lifelong Ed (indicative of just one of the many identity crises she would face), her treasury of infantile growth was published as Learning to Be.4
Officially adopted by the 1976 General Conference of UNESCO, at an early age
she was given an arranged marriage to the international development tycoon and
human resources magnate, Ed Man-Date. This high-profile couple was seen on the
cover of every noteworthy journal and newspaper. Politicking for Ed Man-Date,
and his marathon running son, Continuing Ed (she despised Higher Ed, Man-Date’s
first and drugged-out son), Li’L coined catchy jingles like Ed for All and More
Ed Over Time. Li’L’s sloganeering got her name attached to various global policy
directives of the OECD and UNESCO, and she was used as a poster child for reviving
a flagging working class mobility suffering from weak, ailing curriculum and
educational systems.5 According to biographer Joachim Knoll, Li’L was “linked
with the notion that education is continuous and never completed, that all levels
of formal and out-of-school education merge without a break into a continuum
uninterrupted by final qualifications, and that adult education is only a part of this
concept and is invariably tied to the education that comes before and after it.”6 Li’L
gave a corporeal discipline to the fantasy, part rational, part Dionysian, that every
man, woman and child was wed to the magnate Ed Man-Date, like Li’L herself;
from birth until death do they part.

Critics noted that marrying Li’L to Ed Man-Date was imperialism, par excellence. Their marriage, nearly as popular as that of Prince Charles to the Lady Diana,
reflected globalizing tendencies of education toward the market expansion of World
English/es, for-profit remedial services, and the media. OECD scholar Tom Schuller notes that, virtually out of nowhere, Li’L created an entire life-course of curriculum “beyond the immediate confines of education... [Li’L influenced] an unusually wide range of social spheres and policy areas.” Li’L was an attention grabber, and some say megalomaniacal time-waster, wanting everyone to like her and to be like her. Quite frankly, fueled by the obsessions of Ed Man-Date, everyone did want a bit of Li’L! But through the 1980s, poor Li’L was indentured to mundane things like family matters, demographics, work routines and communicative patterns, none of which were fully appreciated. Staggered by weighty expectations of Ed Man-Date, Li’L often appeared confused. For example, she made graduation seem irrelevant as she blurred significant features of education and made them almost indistinguishable from the perspective of a lifespan. Sentenced to professional development by design, she actually loathed her fate and her somewhat finicky rejection of tradition made her difficult to emulate.

Li’L’s overwhelming popularity and her rocky marriage to Ed throughout the 1970s and 1980s often resulted in showing matches between jealous suitors. Invariably, on one side were liberal educators wanting to use Li’L in the adult edutainment business, with hopes of exploiting Ed Man-Date’s venture capital. On the other side, were critical educators who wanted to use Li’L for trafficking anarchist and dissident ideas in the deschooling underground. The former group placed a high value on the commercial prowess of Li’L to boost competitive economies and create entrepreneurial thinkers or perpetual self-improvers. They saw Li’L as the rising star of neo-liberal progress. The latter bemoaned the hegemonic system that dampened Li’L’s critical faculties, and exacerbated the divide between those who imitated Li’L, the potential- (or ante-Li’L) learner, and the tribe of consummate slackers, the non-learners (or uncool-Li’L). Both admired Li’L’s beauty and got excited when seeing her strut her stuff while modeling individuality.

During the mid 1990s Li’L broke through the glass ceiling, changing from a privileged sweetheart of education and development into a big time power broker in various businesses and governments. The European Union (EU) designated 1996 as the Year of Li’L. Partially in response, the British Labor party, newly elected in 1997, shored up Ed’s support, put Li’L on the payroll and released Higher Education in the Learning Society, a blueprint to poise England for competing against EU countries. Critics disliked the economy of “providers and potential learners” that Li’L’s newfound power imposed on the British population. Also known as the Dearing Report, Higher Education in the Learning Society proposed an accountability scheme for Li’L. Remember what happened when Eliza appropriated too much curriculum in My Fair Lady? The reason for imposing safeguards of legitimacy and accountability for Li’L is obvious enough. This is a surefire way to shift blame for failing to meet outcomes and success, overspending, or underestimating an individual’s eligibility for mobility. Protecting Li’L from getting little credit and a lot of blame, Norman Evans expressed frustration with Dearing, saying this
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smacked of influence from Formal Learning (Granddaddy Pomp), “as if this were the only kind of learning worth mentioning.” But his efforts were unnecessary; in other words, Li’L had long ago rejected many of the family ties that stemmed from Granddaddy Pomp. Li’L preferred to work outside of nepotistic bureaucracies and wanted to crush stubborn or rancorous resistance to her informalities. But, underlying Li’Ls ascent to the top was a nagging concern over the superannuation and maturation of knowledge. Next to her twin bother Shelf-Lifelong Learning (SeL’L), Li’L was overly idealistic and optimistic about knowledge. Li’L wanted the party to go on forever but SeL’L set limits and some say even put an end to it. Economists venerated the pragmatics that Shelf-Life offered, and orchestrated the match made in heaven between SeL’L and the postmodern conditioner, Veri Pomo. It was actually like a pea and a pod with SeL’L and Pomo, living an openly gay relationship and reigning supreme in all the credential clubs. The economists loved it when Pomo put Shelf-Life on to Li’Ls friend, the braggadocio Ph.D. Rather deviously, Shelf-Life slapped a three-year label onto the Ph.D., a club scene version of the ‘kick me!’ trick. And then, acting more like a bouncer than conditioner, Pomo said ‘get a job in the marketplace within three years or your career is done!’ Expert-teasing they called it—all in jest but it felt mean-spirited. Pomo joked and warned that after three years, the Ph.D., for all intents and purposes, was damaged goods. After three years, all the collateral that the Ph.D. offered Li’L amounted to little or nothing. Humiliated, the Ph.D. turned from Li’L to SeL’L. When they snuck the three-year label on Ed.D., he pathetically turned from Li’L to SeL’L to casual and part-time sales. There are precious pictures of SeL’L and Pomo in the university clubs, ruling over the Ph.D. and Ed.D., relegating them to the adjunct and sessional labor pool in the back. Goodbye Li’L, hello SeL’L, they would say! Of course, Li’L tried to counter SeL’L by appealing to the family name that bonded them: Learning (Figure 1). But when Li’L said she stood for the sake of Learning, she was laughed out of the room, and then smartly denied ever having mentioned it.

Li’Ls Progeny And Family Matters

With Ed embroiled in politics in the 1980s and 1990s, Li’L fell head over heels for the smooth talk, slick style and sophisticated notions of The Newmanon Tech Cam(p)us. Somewhat of a Cult Stud in his day, Tech initially turned Li’L on with his academics by saying (sexy) things like “You are nothing but a sliding signifier—an empty bucket into which any ideology can be ladled!” “Oohh, that’s hot!”, Li’L would think. Li’Ls topsy-turvy, steamy romp with this French, cosmopolitan playbook made global headlines, and predictably, she was left to look after their extramarital progeny, Transhumanism (The Posthuman Hermit) and PharmaCopaPsyche (PCP). Somewhat of a mystery, Tech was seemingly always preoccupied, checking on outsourced labor pools and capital dividends. Reluctantly, Li’L turned to Perinatal Learning (uncle Perry NataL, Jr.) for help in family and
Figure 1.
Li’L’s Family Tree
legal matters. Even on a good day, NataL, Jr.’s legal methods were questionable, and his distinct hatred of Mozart and preference for counting time in months seemed peculiar. NataL, Jr. suffered a premature, traumatic birth, and was raised with the neurotic family dog, Learning Disability (LD). Thanks to Granddaddy Pomp’s wealth and upper-class means, NataL, Jr.’s private academy education and admission into law school were assured. He was barely reading at an upper-secondary school level when he began bar exams and made a mockery of the system when he turned the loveable LD loose in the courtrooms. Not quite a luck and pluck story of the self-made wo/man, which Li’L fantasized over, NataL, Jr. bragged he could buy Ed, if he wanted. After mismanaging the careers of both Mix Master Pop and Stylistic Sue and the Learning Curves, he took to looking after the troubled PCP’s cosmeceuticals.

Although The Posthuman Hermit was an ideal child, precocious student, hacktivist programmer, and accomplished surgeon, PCP did not share in her brother’s giftedness. PCP was diagnosed with Chronic Attention Fatigue and, by the time she was five, had lost interest in learning. Her mother was busy spreading the word of the one thing she least wanted to do. She spent her childhood in daycare, tormenting caregivers. Li’L was busy and the absentee Tech was an awful role model. On NataL’s advice, Li’L purchased black market cocktails of Ampakine, Modafinil and HT-0712, costly new brain drugs with amazing (side) effects. As a result, the rising star PCP was apparently able to remember anything, and had near photographic recall. Ed was skeptical, but Li’L and Tech were delighted. PCP’s first thesis was composed when her classmates were still practicing their letters. She won a nationwide contest in the sixth grade for a composition on the story of Algernon, which she later attributed to essaygenerator.com and caffeine.

Petty family feuds with SeL’L and Veri Pomo, and their less than amiable children, Just-in Time Learning (JIT) and Online Learning (Good ol’ Borg), distracted Li’L. New kids on the block, JIT and Good ol’ Borg got all the attention in the late 1990s. Coming of age together, JIT and Good ol’ Borg joined forces to give a boost to dropouts, homebodies, macjobbers, preppies, slackers, suits and yuppies alike in the fast-paced world. Ante-Li’L was anachronistic and obsolescent JIT would complain. With JIT, the new mindset became “As soon as I have this little piece of information, I’m out of here.” Ante-Li’L, No one has “time to commit to a specific curriculum,” JIT impatiently asserted. JIT and her partner, Juste’nuf Learning (no genetic relation), made a formidable team. Nearly always in a hurry, they completed each other’s fragmented sentences while rushing out the door on a high note!

Good ol’ Borg was plenty contentious as well, with pedal to the metal and handheld on dash, he derided Li’L for putting along in the slow lane on the information highway in an old beat up VW modem. To make Li’L angry and jealous, Good ol’ Borg often pulled up to the YWCA where Li’L was working, hung out beside a pimped-out sick ride stolen by some Grand Theft Auto player or another, cranked up the sub-woofer and blasted an mp3 of 50 Cent rapping “Get Rich or Die Tryin.” Boshier, Wilson and Qayyum, detectives of Good ol’ Borg’s and Newmanon
Tech Cam(p)us’s nefarious activities, apologetically noted that Li’L, suffering from future shock, was from an older generation. They pointed out that “in 1972, who could have imagined that a learner in the Outer Hebrides or Stewart Island, New Zealand would one day enroll in an Atlanta, New York or Los Angeles-based course with two clicks of a mouse! In 1972, mice were associated with cheese, not education.”17 Both she and Ed were incensed by Good ol’ Borg’s trouble-making ways and partiality to Velveeta and cloned oncomice.

This drove Li’L to extremes. In 1999, for example, backed by Britain’s Labour minister for higher education, Li’L cooperated with the universities to fabricate course rosters of student customers.18 Li’L was losing her focus and taking on the productive leisure industries. All consuming, Li’L was now deeply implicated in the new order that Ed Man-Date spelled out in the prenuptials.

Despite troubles reproducing with Ed, Li’L exploited the investment strategies he promoted. Ed loved the matriculation ladder business, which Li’Ls lifestyle personified. OECD and Statistics Canada research confirms this, as reported by Hasan: climbing Ed’s ladders, “people with superior education levels are far more likely to [imitate Li’L]: adults with upper-secondary education (but not tertiary) were between 32% and 38% more likely to [follow the path of Li’L] than those with only lower-secondary.”19 There remains a relative degree of transferability of Ed’s capital to economic success, but it is precisely this transferability that Li’L threatened. For a single woman of minority status with children, going to night classes, year after year, to try and get her high school diploma,20 the idea that learning should be uninterrupted by final qualifications might just quell the noble purpose of imitating Li’L. SeL’L and Pomo’s credential spoiling makes this effort of imitation even less promising; even Li’L herself was precariously on the brink of lifelong failure (Li’Fe). She rose to the top of financial and political worlds but never really got off the ground; that is, Ed never had enough curriculum to satisfy her and too much curriculum behind Ed’s back frustrated her.

What Li’L wanted to offer was certainly not more distinction, by degrees, of educated and literate from ‘non-educated’ and ‘illiterate’; class assures the pernicious basis of such distinctions.21 The vaulted promise of Li’L was to level these distinctions. At her most successful, Li’L boosted educational participation by adapting and utilizing work and community settings for rural and urban outreach programs. Li’L disdained the legacy of Granddaddy Pomp and was perhaps overly sensitive to her great grandmother, Everything Elsie Learned, and the work of Adult Learning, Adul-Aid L. Ever the creator of jingle and cliché, Li’L said this does not mean that individuals stop learning; it means they stop being students! As we mature, she said, the systematic administration of Granddaddy Pomp no longer serves the general purpose, nor do the formalities it imposes on learners. At these moments, Li’L truly was a visionary.

Li’L ultimately thought big when learning was at issue. Naturally, and to be theosophical thought Li’L, all sentient life learns, and Gaia is a learning organism.
For Western Christians, the Bible symbolized the chief object of knowledge, whose unquestionable authority was invested in God. Later, this authority was invested in printed words and books. By extension into education, textbooks took over the formidable control of content and intellectual discipline in classrooms. With the arrival of Good ol’ Borg and his virtual classroom, databases of ‘repeatable learning objects’ standardize and legitimate knowledge according to the veracity of customers. Whereas for the providers, knowledge is a value added asset of productive and competitive mobility. Li’L’s message was stern but clear: Knowledge was anything that is learned!

Li’L’s logic nevertheless mitigates and distributes an archaic social order, in which the servant learns the master’s habits, and the role of the learner becomes modeled on imitation of the master’s leisure, as Thorsten Veblen made clear a century earlier. The adult-level Masters Degree is a credential whose derivation is of this older order of social stratification, and delineated the point in a person’s growth when one had arrived at moral, intellectual and spiritual maturity. A Masters degree bestowed on its bearer the right to teach and to lead the flock. SeL’L and Pomo changed all this, but originally, this degree could be attained (provided one was male, monied, and motivated) in the same timeframe it takes to graduate from high school. Li’L sought to offer this kind of distinction to everyone. Indeed, the largesse surrounding Li’L eventually came to naught.

Approaching thirty, and desperate to finally turn power into profit, Li’L entered into the horrific underworld of profiteering. Spurred on by confidence in the RRSP market and the Li’L Plan that Trimark Investment Management was promoting, she teamed up with Ed Man-Date, the likes of “quick-footed” Ferrari Nick, and British government politicians, including “Shadow” Minister, Alistair Burt.22 Launched in September 2000, Li’L’s scam was nearly foolproof: (1) Convince students aged nineteen and up that they were customers and provide them with funds and discounts up to £200 per course. (2) Convince government to set up Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) and provide for these funds and discounts. (3) Allow (and here’s the beauty of the scam and where no-accounts like Ferrari Nick come in) any entrepreneur who could produce a list of names and a course to cash in on the funds. Ferrari Nick and various small-time crooks got the ILA money but the big investment would go into Li’L’s account. Nine companies that set up computer science courses, many of which were bogus, snagged about $38 million in the name of Li’L. All in all, Ferrari Nick and dozens like him bilked the British government out of the equivalent of $1.69 million by cashing in on lists of “students” enrolled in Li’L’s dream courses: Chronic Cats 2001, Creative Writing, Learn to Draw and Paint, National Powerboat Certificate, Exercise to Music, Transcendental Meditation, Summer Glastonbury 2001 and Crystal Healing. Regrettably, in early October 2001, the BBC broke the news on the widespread scheme, which affected 1.2 million “students.”23 Defending Li’L’s innocence in the ILA scandal, one of the ministers asserted: “on the street ... Ferrari Nick is supposed to be one of the leading people.” Suggesting that Li’L was
complicit, another responded, “if someone can get an epithet like that [i.e., Ferrari Nick]... that’s when you have to take concerted action.” Exposed as fraud, it was all too much to bear. As Secretary of State David Blunkett confessed: “As well as galling, the failure of ILAs struck a devastating blow to” Li’L. Ed Man-Date was indicted and Li’L collapsed. Neither the promise of a lofty place in the academy nor a campaign by scholars committed to her cause could rescue her from the hard life of the underground and streets. Her decision to gamble with Ferrari Nick was reckless. Tragically, Li’L was found and pronounced dead by the end of 2003.

Although captive to the lure of the cultish Extropians, The Posthuman Hermit came to a simple, yet profound conclusion: The life and times of Li’L were much too short! Or more properly, any lifespan for Li’L would naturally be ridiculously limited by the frailties of biology and mortality. The life of Li’L—indeed, of all—was and is much too short. Although PCP’s booming cosmetic neurology business with its anti-aging tucks, nose jobs, and longevity drugs might have extended Li’L further into the twenty-first century, The Posthuman Hermit wanted to allow genetics to reengineer Li’L’s shortcomings. And although experimenting with the Just Say Knowbot, which will emulate Li’L by learning everything it confronts, The Posthuman Hermit is impatient with crude, wearable memory devices and microprocessor implants to monitor Li’L. The goal is to push AI to exhaust the potential of overcoming Li’L’s limitations by appealing to virtual existence. Paradoxically, the longer the lifespan, the greater the Li’L! There is no doubt, Li’L is dead, but the legend lives on—Li’L is dead, long live Li’L! We are certain that Li’Ls wake was not merely a mock funeral, but are less certain that the remains are stuffed into a common urn, as most suspect (Figure 2). It is entirely plausible that, given the obsessions of The Posthuman Hermit, Li’L is cryopreserved in the Extropian’s transgenic laboratory, awaiting a grand revival and new lease on immortality. If our calculations are correct, an extended lifespan for Li’L, or for anyone, would defer the afterlife for a fixed amount on the mortgage we take out on the future. That is, assuming that the principle of Li’L (i.e., always learning, never forgetting) remains constant.

Li’Ls Final Examination: Our Lady of Perpetual Tutelage

Knowledge, as intellectual property, or as SeUL, Pomo, JIT and Good ol’ Borg might have it, is over-inflated by pecuniary and invidious rights of ownership. Through these property rites, a social die is cast as well. It is not a new mold, but not until relatively recently—coinciding with the advent of the European NGO’s re-adopting of Li’L to be precise—has it been applied to such a global agenda. To assess the legacy of Li’L, a tentative distinction must be drawn between the principle of the self-motivated learner and the social conditions of learning. On the one hand, we have a platitude of biblical proportion: give a wo/man a lesson, and s/he’ll l/earn for a day, teach him/her how to l/earn and s/he’ll become Li’L. On the other hand, we have an evolution of social consciousness in which a gendered,
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class-based type is universalized, positioning Li’L as the conspicuous consumer of curriculum, thus perpetually self-improving, accruing new interest(s) and, at the political level, merit for national patriotism. We consume curriculum as we consume gas or household products. By yielding to market forces, Li’L got mixed up with...
the wrong crowd, or was it vice versa? SeL', Pomo, JIT and Good oL' Borg would have helped Li'L to market herself as well.

Anticipating much of this in 1899, Veblen’s *The Theory of the Leisure Class* suggests “there is reason to believe that the institution of ownership began with the ownership of persons, primarily women.” Women were valued as displays of men’s power through an excess of all things, including time to develop abstract knowledge. This notion remains popular, and the term *academic* is euphemized to suggest irrelevance, acquired unnecessarily, the first principle of leisurely lifestyle. However, the parochial system was also based on knowing one’s station in life. It was not an invitation for Li’L to question the authority of systems of knowledge. In pinpointing the genealogy of this gendered social stereotype, Veblen argues that the chivalric model idealized “ladies of high degree (who) were conceived to be in perpetual tutelage, and to be scrupulously exempt from all useful work.”28 The model, he argues, has held sway ever since leisure classes could distinguish themselves through consumption. Indeed, Li’L prided herself on adept complicity and perpetual tutelage. She was, however, necessarily never complete, nor was she actually free from reproductive obligations. Poor Li’L had such an esteemed heritage, and yet squandered her fame and power with such wasteful pursuits.

If Li’L had cultural origins in the socially elevated wife’s station, as Veblen claims, were these gendered predispositions handed down to her from Everything Elsie Learned and the role modeling of Adul-Aid L? “Greater equality in initial education in the past 20 years has meant that in a majority of countries, women aged 25 to 34 have completed more years of initial education that men of the same age. But men are more likely at this age to be currently engaged in learning; they receive for example a disproportionate share of training at work.”29 This incongruity is nevertheless explained if one considers that women are more likely to be engaged with Li’L’s pursuits (but not receiving remuneration), and they are therefore below the statistical radar. As Hasan concludes, “it will never be possible to construct fully adequate indicators of all the informal learning that occurs in people’s lives… but it is already possible to show that only a minority of the OECD population is participating in education and training,” Li’L-like.30 While the credentials and volume of education a person, male or female, receives in their lifetime is increasing in financially privileged countries, this has done little to decrease social stratification. Many issues cause this divide: ability, class, gender, race, sexuality, and health, twine together in a Gordian knot of social positioning. One person’s learning is another’s labor. As such, it would seem that few could afford to imitate Li’L’s lifestyle.31 Let’s be honest. Li’L was a hard act to follow.

Despite the many optimistic claims made for Li’L, she basically preached to the converted, or more appropriately, taught the learned. To get a jump on life, Li’L’s legacy left uncle Perry NataL, Jr. with a respectable market share. But which way ought we go? Before proceeding with what we believe reverses the legacy of Li’L in an unexpected direction, we briefly review the life of Li’L.
Growing up privileged but somewhat uncultivated in the 1970s, Li’L became a celebrity for education and development. Adopted by the renowned UNESCO family, and married off to the global magnate Ed Man-Date, she was a godsend to nervous politicians and educators. However, attempts to domesticate her were met with more failure than success. In the 1980s, Li’L’s tireless efforts were able to reach indigent populations of the urban centers, many of whom returned again and again as faithful customers. Eventually, her preference for informalities exposed contradictions between the scarcity and proliferation of curriculum, confusing aspirations. Although life on the road and the stressors of poverty took their toll, Li’L abandoned the streets in the mid 1990s and, craving power, moved from soup lines to boardrooms. The British government was especially enthusiastic in contracting out for Li’L’s services and she ably exploited ambitions. Power corrupts and Li’L was no exception. Tempted by the seedy world of profiteering, Li’L joined up with shadowy ministers and no-accounts like Ferrari Nick to hatch an all but foolproof, soft money learning scheme. This would be Li’L’s nest egg if not for political incompetence. Disillusioned, Li’L hit the streets and turned to PCP, decisions that proved fatal. At the end of 2003, Li’L was pronounced dead.²²

Li’L leaves behind her floundering, shifty husband, Ed Man-Date, and two out of wedlock children with lover Newmanon Tech Cam(p)us, The Posthuman Hermit and PCP, who are entrepreneurially redesigning her estate for the 21st century. Upon her untimely death, Li’L’s grieving brother SeL’L and husband Veri Pomo, now quite comfortable with their stage show of practical jokes, reluctantly passed on their share of Li’L’s assets to her nephew and niece, Good oL’ Borg and JIT (with partner, Juste’nuf Learning). Uncle Perry NatA, Jr., presiding over the will for Li’L, was bequeathed the entire share of the pro-life stocks that Li’L and Ed Man-Date finagled during the bull market of the 1980s and 1990s. At the reading of the will, two long forgotten twin cousins—lineage of thrice-divorced revelator Too Little, Too Late-in-Lifelong Learning—paraded in like deities demanding rights to certain aspects of Li’L. ALL for One (Artificial Lifelong Learning) and One for ALL (Afterlifelong Learning) convinced NatA, Jr. that Li’L had secretly bequeathed to them what she found distasteful and, like most of us, repressed: the afterlife and the artificial.

Many of Li’L’s most loyal supporters, baby boomers by most estimates, are now retiring and reproaching inevitable replacement and redundancy. For this generation, curriculum likely has to transcend the immediate, competitive nature of consumerist existence. The model of economic and political gain comes at the expense of life’s other duties and rewards. Somewhat exasperated by it all, Li’L realized that personal successes offered few rewards past a competitive, socially mobile existence. Upon maturing through the developmental stage of pecuniary self-interest, the knowledge most required of this, and every generation, ultimately, will no longer be the profitable kind. Nobody expected that Li’L would be gone so soon, leaving future learning unaddressed. Absent from Li’L’s education and teach-
ing was a discourse regarding how to bring our re/productive phase to a dignified halt, and as educators we risk abandoning individuals when they most need Li’L’s guidance. Li’L never had a chance to retire. With her tragic death, she never had a chance to plan for what comes next. The notion of the end of life was absent from Li’L’s dissertations. As a result, our scholarly ability to know, understand and model the best lifelong curriculum is seriously impaired. In other words, Li’L’s problem may have had less to do with feuds over the family surname “Learning” than it did with the given name “Lifelong.”

Abrahamsson sums up Li’L’s legacy in a similar fashion. He confirms that “the question of how long ‘lifelong’ is and what kind of learning counts is not easy to answer.” Furthermore, the increasing longevity in many nations has “given new dimensions to [Li’L]. They include not only post-compulsory learning, but also post-work and post-retirement learning excursions.” If, as Hasan claims, “there is a considerable distance to go in making learning a reality ‘for all,’ even without considerations of content, quality, and relevance,” then we must again ask: In what direction and to what end ought we go? Again, if “attaining the goal would be costly but it is also an investment,” then we need to know what goal and who such an investment is intended to benefit. Once an older population moves from the productive to more quiescent phase of existence, how can we be sure this investment remains sound? As JIT asked, is there not a built-in obsolescence in Li’L’s ideas? The wealth of curriculum that any of Li’L’s disciples commanded, if not passed on, impoverished or made redundant by SeL’L, Pomo, JIT and Good ol’ Borg, is interred with them in the grave; and ostensibly, the investment is wasted.

**And Death Not Ends It**

All her life, Li’L was haunted by a ghostly apparition of Li’Fe. But who receives and records these final grades of Li’L, or indeed, all lifelong learners, of which the consummate qualifying exam is perforce death? Allah, God, the scenes of the judgment and weighing of souls—all these various metaphors of our immortal counterparts in the transition from life-state to death-state—were absent from Li’L’s lectures and discussions. Ironically, these scenes do infuse the genealogy and ethos of the scholarly ideal that underpins the promises and social profit to be made at the point of educational delivery. They also infuse Ed’s model of examining students to determine their intellectual maturity, capacity and worth. There may be a pragmatism in the final judgment of Li’L, whether explicit or implicit, emphasizing her economic benefits, her social charms, competitive advantages, and in some instances, the ameliorative effects of informed behavior on individuals. But what of all her other aims? Where are our exemplary models of well-educated, politically activated, Average Jo(s)ie citizens? Poor Li’L is gone, but certainly not forgotten. Anthropologists involved in studies of comparative cultural practices around funerary traditions have shown that the distrust of death as an end in itself is common, and
After-Lifelong Learning

has led to customs of disposing of bodies in ways that make them uninhabitable by the wandering and wanton spirits of the deceased. They have connected rituals of cremation and interment with other rituals, such as the covering of household mirrors or the use of singing and chanting to guide the spirit away from desiring to re-inhabit their physical form. Such correspondences need not posit any form of proof, but they should put into a different light the corporeality and materialism of contemporary education and the institutional evaluation of worthwhile knowledge.

Ever the positivist, Freud did not believe in the afterlife, dismissing it as an illusion or delusion, or relegating it to the irrational work of Thanatos, the death instinct. He spent most of his time with Li’L’s aunt, Unconscious Learning (Dominatrix Subliminal), and rejected One for AL’L out of hand. The creation of spirits and the promise of the afterlife were little more than the result of doubling or nothing. As “insurance against the destruction of the ego” and extinction, said Freud, the mortal creates a double, a spirit, of her or his self. “Supposedly educated people have ceased to believe officially that the dead can become visible as spirits,” Freud reasoned, and toned down beliefs in the afterlife with mere piety. Indeed, Dominatrix Subliminal gently disciplined him to follow Perry NataL, Jr.’s future career of after-education rather than education in the hereafter. As intellectual historian Deborah Britzman notes, Freud busied himself cleaning up (on) the failures of Granddaddy Pomp. Freud and Dominatrix Subliminal turned after-education into the “unheimlich,” or uncanny monster Lifelong Unlearning (Lou). Suffice to say that Li’L egotistically hated but subconsciously loved the monster.86

From the scant information gathered on the subject, it would appear that the most leisurely class of all are the dead. They are, for all human purposes, past usefulness, and thus the most excluded group under (post)modern, western definitions of utility. Here, in this seemingly paradoxical market, we can truly test Li’L’s praxis of personal and professional development. For if it is a mode of preparation, what has a life of learning led to if such learning is to be instantly wasted upon exit? Surely some part is sheltered in consciousness or wisdom, which transcend physical existence, and death is a good way to assure of this final deposit. The education of the dead is a spurious concept only if one allows that there is a predetermined, mandatory return on educational investments, and if one holds steadfast to a capitalistic investment model.

In taking Afterlifelong Learning (One for AL’L) seriously, we would by no means be soliciting for the likes of Marilyn Mansion or taking advance orders for everlasting holy books. Nor would we be smug in an expectation of death or setting precedent. We are simply reiterating Li’L’s story and have not had near death or out of body experiences (OObE) or claim any special psychic powers. And we are by no means endorsing various lifeline programs and specific afterlife technologies such as Hemi-Sync®, in which Newmanon Tech, The Posthuman Hermit, PCP, and Good ol’ Borg have interests. We appreciate the Tibetan Book of the Dead as much
as the Afterlife Knowledge Guidebook. It is only recently, and basically only in the modern west, that the education, examination, and standardization of spiritual matters stopped being a predominant concern among the living ‘masters’. Today, with our increased levels of formal education, we remain like school-aged children who likewise regard the adult world with deserved suspicion and gradual subjugation. If we are to remain like children throughout our lives, and never achieve a condition of proper emotional, psychological or spiritual maturity, then is it Death that will set the standards and dictate what it is we must continue to learn?

In this day and age, a man can reproduce well after death and embryo research on frozen eggs is making this a reliable option for women as well. Lawyers are methodically figuring out the rights of inheritance for the offspring of posthumous conception and postmortem reproduction. A primary factor in legal decisions on rights is the decedent’s intention to reproduce from the grave or urn. Depositing eggs or sperm is typically taken to be an indication of intent. Having resolved the perpetration of a scam at the reading of Li’L’s will, Perry NataL, Jr. is now looking into donor identity and inheritance rights for AL’L for One. Educators are similarly tackling the sticky issue of after-lifelong learning rights. For example, would a contract or will underlining the wishes of the decedent to advance through the afterlife compel the living to spiritual teaching(s)? Is our sentence to a life of Li’L binding or can we escape her fate?37

Hopefully we will be more ready for death when it arrives than was poor Li’L. But what if our education has failed us, and individually, we did not acquire the requisite knowledge to have a good death? Now, we hear the advocates of Li’L calling on her spirit, much as the social scientists call on and curse the specter of Marx. It is important, if we are to raise the dead like Elijah from the pit of Sheol, that we listen to what One for AL’L has to say, and pay heed especially to things that may make little sense in our business of the worldly day. Li’L’s spirit may deliver some surprising revelations, and we are loathe to calls for more religious dogmatism or moral prescriptions about the evils of sin. Yet cynicism, agnosticism, or secularism, Li’L may again tell us, are of little use after death. The turning of the wheel and the way we respond to or in the afterlife involve a significance that outlasts the quarterly returns of Ed’s investments. Notoriously, political leaders, such as Blair and Bush, “talk about 50 percent of 18 year olds going on into higher education… [and] a whole new type of student body.”38 Whether or not the demands of a new student body create a run on limited curriculum, or whether curriculum proliferates for the new student body to the point of exhaustion or lifeless corpse remains to be seen. Li’L’s life and death move us to ask if curriculum is eutrophic and at the moment of death in a drone of information or merely inadequate in size, time, volume, and quality. This is precisely the problem under consideration by the Automata Data Corporation.39 Pressing the issue, Britzman wonders “how strange to confront curriculum and all that it holds as a burial place, a crypt?” It may not be so weird to go (to lengths) to pyre high(er and deeper) if we speculate, that just maybe, curriculum killed Li’L.40 Let us think of Li’L
as a sign of our times: both signifier of the limits and corporeality of curriculum and signified immateriality of pleasure and fear that plagues the somewhat meaningless, pointless life and death of Li’L.

Now Dearly Beloved, among us, we believe that after Li’L, After-Lifelong Learning is the promise that awaits us. We (barely) trust in Perry NataL Jr., but implore all to plan for the inevitable at the other end of the rainbow. You may practice as Li’L preached, and go through the motions of (spiritual) literacy, of pulling yourself up by the bootstraps, but woe to those who think this is adequate for the Afterlifelong Learning that awaits. Your journey merely begins with the mortal words of Li’L, yet these will not sustain your passage. You are beseeched with the question: After Lifelong Learning, then what? Prepare, Dearly Beloved, for what a long, strange trip it will be…

Notes


3. Faction is “the fictionalization of fact, the operational admixture of the documentary and the imaginative. But the term itself, ‘faction,’ highlights as well another context, a literary-critical one, and the disciplinary contest between the historical and the literary…. ‘Faction,’ then, in this other context, all too often culminates in the determining question, ‘which side are you on?’—and so returns to the political the differences that it makes.” Barbara Harlow, “Critical Factions and Fiction,” Novel: A Forum on Fiction 30 no. 2 (1997): 259-261, on 259. Faction is referred to as creative nonfiction, literary nonfiction, narrative nonfiction and literary journalism, and includes pulp faction and science faction among its genres. See also Katherine Hall, “Writing Fiction on Two Levels,” The Writer 113 no. 7 (2000): 11; Paul Many, “Literary Journalism: Newspapers’ Last, Best Hope,” Connecticut Review 18 no. 1 (1996): 59-69.


6 Edgar Faure, Felipe Herrera, Abdul-Razzaq Kaddoura, Henri Lopes, Arthur V. Petrovsky, Majid Rahnema & Frederick C. Ward, *Learning to Be* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972). The genius, or mistake, of *Learning to Be* was that Faure et al. never filled in the blank, enabling anyone to finish the sentence. Learning to be greedy was as likely a candidate as learning to be fair.


8 Knoll, “International Adult Education,” 86.


11 McWilliam, “Against Professional Development.”


25 Evans, Making Sense of Lifelong Learning, 38.
27 For example, “In 1999, Lynn decided to return to college. She withdrew $5,000 under the LLP in 1999, $13,000 in 2000 and $7,000 in 2001. In the year 2000, since her withdrawal exceeded the annual limit of $10,000, she had to include $3,000 in her income for that year. In 2001, her withdrawal made her cumulative withdrawals ($5,000 + $10,000 + $7,000 = $22,000) exceed the participation limit of $20,000, so she must include $2,000 in her income for that year.” Trimark, Lifelong Learning Plan, 1.
29 Hasan, International Handbook of Lifelong Learning, 397.
34 Hasan, International Handbook of Lifelong Learning, 401.


39 The trouble is that Tech, JIT, Good ol’ Borg and The Transplant Kid are now the major shareholders of the ADC. John Willinsky, Technologies of Knowing: A Proposal for the Social Sciences (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).


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Call for Special Issue of Taboo—
“Womanist Pedagogy:
Defining the Theory and Practice”

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education invites papers for a special issue focusing on womanist pedagogy. Djanna Hill-Brisbane and Jeannine Dingus will serve as guest educators for this special issue around the theme “Womanist Pedagogy: Defining the Theory and Practice.”

We draw upon Alice Walker’s (1984) definition of a womanist being a Black feminist or feminist of color, who is committed to the survival and wholeness of an entire people, loves culture and self, and holds a greater scope and intensity than Black feminism. A womanist is an agent of social change. However, this definition has problematic aspects.

Walker’s definition implicates that all women of color can be womanists, if self perceived as a Black feminist or feminist of color. Black women are not womanists simply by implication, but they can certainly become womanists. The question arises however when we ask, who can be a Black feminist or a feminist of color. For example, Michael Awkward (2000) who advocates a Black male feminist presence considers womanism particularly suggestive to African American men because it foregrounds a Black physic health as its primary objective, a goal not found to be a part of Black feminism. Thus, if Black men can be womanists, can not White women? Under this umbrella term, many fit, however, who can be a womanist remains to be seen.

This call invites papers that explore the womanist concept, describe what a womanist pedagogy might look like, and define womanist theory and pedagogy in past and present contexts. Submitters are encouraged to explore points of tension, new directions, and considerations of positionality in relation to womanist theory. As an alternative to traditional pedagogies, a Black womanist pedagogy is both similar to and distinct from emancipatory pedagogy (Gordon, 1986; Freire, 1996),

—continued on page 36—
Bono for Pope?
A Case for Cultural Studies
in Media Education

Michael Hoechsmann

Right in the middle of a contradiction, isn’t always a bad place to be.
—Bono (Lee, 2007).

Philanthropy is like hippy music, holding hands. Red is more like punk rock, hip hop; this should feel like hard commerce.
—Bono (Weber, 2006).

What does a fabulously wealthy rock star, one who moonlights as a human rights activist in the global struggles to eradicate poverty and confront the HIV/AIDS pandemic, have to teach us in an era of globalization? If we accept the premise that the media is a distorting mirror, one that reflects back to us attitudes and worldviews already circulating in our milieu, then the answer is a lot. One of the objectives of media literacy is to cultivate the critical abilities of students—or media consumers more generally—to analyze media texts and the cultural practices associated with them such as fandom, fashion, dance crazes, remixing (or bricolage), consumerism, culture jamming, etc. Picking apart Bono as a media phenomenon seems straightforward at first blush: he is either an opportunist sell-out, using his fans’ social concerns to line his pockets, or he is the second coming, a rock star who really cares, a person who will sacrifice some of the trappings of his privilege to help others. Analyzing Bono as a media text might show a folksy, populist image (the broken-down hat, the blue jeans), mixed with a dash of Monaco chic (the ubiquitous coloured shades), a cross between hyperactive hippy and down-home star. The problem with essentializing Bono, however, of treating him as a fixed object of analysis, is that we lose sight of the forest for the trees. Bono, for the sake of argument here, is a fiction created by his fans. Bono represents us - our hopes, dreams and fears. He is but a distorting mirror which reflects back to us many of the values and norms we take for granted. Reading Bono also means reading the social and cultural conditions of our times.

Presumably Bono looked into the mirror when he went shopping at the GAP
with his good friend Oprah last October 13th. Painting the town red was given a new meaning when this famous pair went on a little spending spree to celebrate the launch of the Product Red campaign, a donations-from-profit campaign that siphons on average 40% of the profits from the sale of selected products (Weber, 2006) to the Global Fund, an organization that funds direct intervention projects that target the spread and treatment of HIV-AIDS, primarily in Africa. The Red campaign, co-chaired by junior-Kennedy Bobby Shriver, aims to channel the hyper-consumerism of the global North—where ‘to buy is to be’ in the circuits of identity formation and performative selves—into an economic force for front-line health care in Africa. Says Bono:

AIDS in Africa is an emergency, that’s why we chose the color Red. When you buy a (PRODUCT) RED product, the company gives money to buy pills that will keep someone in Africa alive. The idea is simple, the products are sexy and people live instead of die. It’s consumer power at work for those who have no power at all. (Cosmoworlds, 2006)

The concept is great, once one capitulates to the ‘only game in town’ theory of advanced capitalism, and the ideological baggage is breathtaking. Products are sexy, consumers are powerful, and corporations are magnanimous. In one beautiful flourish, Bono held up an Amex Red Card with the words “This card is designed to eliminate HIV in Africa” written on the back. “This is really sexy to me,” Bono said. “It is sexy to want to change the world” (Evening Standard, 2006). Sexy is the currency of the culture of consumerism, so there is presumably nothing out of place in equating a credit card with sexiness and it is a welcome development to make social change on a global stage appear sexy. ‘Bring it on,’ we might want to say. And Bono is complying, even at some risk to his reputation if one of his corporate partners turns out to be next week’s child labour scandal. He remarked that “with 6,500 people dying every day, it’s worth a rock star ending up with a little bit of egg on his face” (Weber, 2006).

Bono is a walking contradiction, at once a merchant of cool, a self interested capitalist, and simultaneously one of the world’s most famous social justice activists. Bono has been in the news a lot in the last two years, not just for releasing platinum-selling, Grammy-winning How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb and for leading U2 on the Vertigo tour, the second highest grossing tour in rock and roll history at $377 million, but also for his lobbying of world leaders before and after the G8, his involvement in the global network of rock concerts called Live 8, his co-award with Bill and Melinda Gates as TIME magazine’s Person of the Year in 2005 and, incredibly, his nomination with Bob Geldof for two years running for a Nobel Peace Prize. There is no precedent for Bono. A fair number of celebrities step off the stage or out from the silver screen to play small parts on the global stage such as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors, and occasionally a celebrity or group of celebrities plays a role in an unfolding drama such as the British ska group The Specials did in releasing
the anthemic “Free Nelson Mandela.” But Bono, the free-lancing, moon-lighting rock star politico, who is equally at home hob-nobbing world leaders at Davos as performing in front of audiences of thousands, has no peer.

There is no easy answer for the Bono effect, but it is of signal importance to recognize that there is a glimmer of hope presented in his massive popularity. At a time when it appears that young people in the global North are under the thrall of mass mediated identity texts, I would like to make the claim that many youth are “buying in but not selling out.” Wandering in the streets of Granada, Spain in 2005, I was struck by the slogan “Bono for Pope” on a t-shirt. Googling it at home in Montreal, I found Bono for Pope on-line petitions and blogs. This playful intervention on another media event of 2005, the naming of a new Pope, has me thinking of the role of the media in naming our cultural worlds, in articulating values and norms that circulate among us, even while distorting them along the way. What might appear on the surface as obvious—here is a rock star trading on his celebrity to make a more lasting, positive mark on the world—is not so when we scratch below to see what he tells us about the tenor our times. We have to understand that Bono—the person, the rock star, the lobbyist and activist that exists in a material sense—is also a “stand-in,” a body-double, for a set of values and norms that are circulating in our world.

**Media Literacy and Media Education**

Media education provides teachers and learners the opportunity to engage in the study of contemporary social and cultural values and to situate the curriculum in a meaningful manner in the lived realities of the students. It is a realm of inquiry that treats contemporary forms and practices as historically situated and thus enables the study of resonant social and cultural matters faced by young people. It is at once consumption and production oriented. Central to the project of media education is the teaching of critical interpretation techniques for decoding media texts and phenomena and technical skills for producing, or encoding, media products. In this paper, however, I would like to argue for a third aspect to media education, a grounded approach to cultural studies in media education. For the sake of not shrouding this concept behind a veil of impenetrable language, I will put this in straightforward terms: Media Education offers teachers the opportunity to gain some understanding of their students’ lifeworlds. It is a collaborative crash course on culture and cultural change as lived by the students who inhabit the classroom or community centre. Before describing the cultural studies approach further, some terms need to be addressed. First is the distinction between media literacy and media education.

**Media Literacy**

1. Like literacy, a schooled capacity and competency, an ability to interpret and produce media texts. The result of formal media education. An essential element of citizenship engagement in a media saturated culture.
(2) Like speech, a domain of learning also outside of schools, one children
begin to develop years before they come to school.

**Media Education**

(1) Teaching/learning about the media industry and how to interpret mul-
tiple forms of media. Teaching/learning codes and conventions of media
genres and how to undertake semiotic and content analyses.

(2) Teaching/learning to produce multiple forms of media, print, visual
and oral/aural.

(3) An engagement, both by educators and students, with the evolving
culture(s) youth inhabit.

Two key points should be raised in relation to this definition of media literacy
and media education. First, media literacy is not something only learned from
teachers. Inhabiting a media saturated world by necessity involves an immersion
in the codes and conventions of media and a learning process, though later in
childhood, equivalent to that of learning a first language. Examples of this are the
critical capacities of eight year olds to see through the false promises of advertis-
ing and the gradual accumulation by children of procedural knowledge of media
cues (this is a flashback sequence; there was a cut in the dramatic sequence from
one location to another; a close-up of an object—a knife, for example—suggests a
future development in the plot). To see how television teaches its viewers these cues
over time, starting simply and gradually becoming more complex, one only has to
look at a typical demographic progression, say from Barney through Scooby Doo
to The OC. The learning curve that the typical young person embarks on is also
one that the culture as a whole has undertaken over the last 60 years as television
in particular, and the media in general, has become more complex and sophisti-
cated (Johnson, 2005). Given that media literacy is not something learned only
in structured learning environments, there are two wild cards embedded in media
education from the start. On the one hand, there is the hand of the powerful in the
mix—media corporations and those corporations whose products are pitched in the
media. On the other, there is an insider knowledge already possessed by the learner,
one which in many instances outstrips that of the teacher (Jenkins, 2006).

The second point to be made in relation to this unschooled media literacy is
that it contains elements of the changing cultural context(s) young people experience
as their immediate environment, a set of contexts that are more familiar and
less alien to youth than is the school. Media education offers an opportunity par
excellence to get ‘in the paint’ with our students, to borrow an expression from
the wildly popular NBA. The vast majority of our students are consumers and
fans of at least some media texts, and these texts are sites not only of pleasure
and entertainment, but also of learning (Giroux & Simon, 1989; Schwoch, White,
& Reilly, 1992; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997). These texts are produced for the most part by a media industry that relentlessly researches its audiences, and that produces a great bulk of material for those demographics including young people that are seen to mobilize spending power in the marketplace. Discussing the cycle of symbolic exchange that leads to youth media consumption, Paul Willis states that “commerce keeps returning to the streets and common culture to find its next commodities” (1990, 19). The point is that commerce does not manufacture youth consciousness, but attempts to harness it. This is how and why Michael Jordan and Nike shoes became so madly popular a decade ago:

Why do kids like Nike “Air Jordans?” Because Michael Jordan is the embodiment of cool, a vehicle for youth dreams and desires. What is cool? Well, that emerges from popular culture…. not as the result of the advertisers’ creative genius but through social practice, be it on the basketball court, in the school halls, or on the street corner, (Hoechsmann, 2001, 274)

Educators like to style themselves as ‘in the know,’ sensitive to and aware of the spheres of influence young people have to contend with, but they lack the resources mobilized by the media industry for extensive grounded research into the lives of young people. (See the PBS documentary Merchants of Cool for a description of the lengths taken by industry to identify and assess youth trends: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/). But this is where taking media texts seriously as windows into the lifeworlds our students inhabit is one of the great potentials of media literacy and media education. These windows open up vistas into multiple worldviews, some that are vapid and superficial, others that are harmful and problematic, still others that are inspiring sites of possibility, and the vast majority that are contradictory and complex knots of meanings in search of a referent.

Media “moments” such as that represented by Bono provide a powerful synchronic snapshot point of view of history as it is lived and felt by young people. Arguably, the Bono moment in youth culture is less pervasive than was the Michael Jordan moment. In “What We Have to Learn from Michael Jordan,” I argued that the Jordan moment articulated youth culture, race and consumer culture in a specific and historically contingent manner. I said:

That moment in history—when globalization, media culture, the fetishization of Afro-American culture, the marketing and popularity of the sneaker, the growth of a new global corporation (Nike), and the need in the United States for a squeaky clean black role model coalesced—will be forever Michael’s. (2001, 269)

In other words, Michael Jordan was, or is, an imaginary version of real social and cultural selves at a particular historical moment, a distorting mirror, but one which tells a story about the state of our culture(s) at the time. The story of Michael Jordan was a powerful one in the circuits of youth culture and arguably one that drew together youth of diverse cultural heritage in a way that Bono never will. But Jordan was not nominated for a Nobel Peace prize; in fact, his reputation is somewhat tarnished, not
only for his brief foray into gambling but for his association with the Nike brand and hence the problems of the underbelly of economic globalization: outsourcing North American jobs and unfair labour practices in Asia and Central America.

It is in these contradictions that some of the most compelling stories for youth lie. Regardless of the popular characterization of North American youth as consumption-mad slackers, driven more by the need to fulfill their self- and group-identities in consumption than to care about their social and environmental conditions, the reality is far more optimistic. If anything, youth coming of age in the information age have access to a broader range of data and opinions about the world than ever before. Examples abound of youth activism, or, at minimum, emergent consciousness, even if some pro-social and pro-environmental attitudes coexist with the same consumerist mentality which is part of the problem to begin with. It is not my intention to paint a romantic picture of an active culture of resistance on the part of youth, but to register some caveats to too pessimistic a reading of the cultural impacts of consumption upon youth. What is required in this context is a more flexible way of conceiving social change, a more inclusive emancipatory agenda which does not turf the uninitiated out on their ears for not living up to prevailing political orthodoxies. For this purpose, I adopt Andrew Ross’s term, “impure criticism,” to describe an approach that refuses “any high theoretical ground or vantage point” and instead launches itself into the contradictory terrain of everyday life (1989). An impure criticism starts from the premise that people are not mere hostages to a dominant ideology, but that they are knowing and sentient beings who do things for reasons (even if not always for good ones). Impure criticism resists preachy disdain and instead looks for the sites of possibility in seemingly contradictory political worldviews. And here is where a media education agenda fits in.

Young people are learning all the time, inside and outside of schools. Given that they spend many hours immersed in media consumption across varying platforms, it is of increasing importance that this learning be addressed by educators. We worry that they are becoming “vidiots” and audio slaves, hooked on the high of computer gaming and oblivious to the grand silences that informed our learning in university libraries and late nights hovering over our typewriters. David Buckingham argues against a media education approach which positions youth as innocent victims that need to be protected from media influences and rather that we empower young people to read and produce media (2003). Some of the young people we work with are taking this approach without our tutelage in the new Web 2.0 platforms such as MySpace and YouTube. Significantly, TIME magazine named the interactive “you” of the millions who have contributed to the new electronic public spheres as the 2006 Person of the Year. It is the element of play at play in the new media technologies and popular culture of today that can enable a wholesale revolution in the manner in which we view teaching and learning. This is a learn to play – play to learn era, and the young folks who still have a foot in the sand box have an advantage. They don’t have to think ‘out of the box’ because they haven’t
yet begun to shut the lid. Those young people with the technological advantage are those with the means (time + money x motivation) to play. The gizmo world we live in is a tinkerer’s paradise. Most of the new tools/toys have multiple capacities that can only be discovered by the most dedicated among us. The term “popular culture” is a slippery one, too often used to refer to the artifacts and emissions of the media industries, the products rather than the practices. But popular means of the people. We are constantly making and remaking our cultural selves, one popular step at a time. As John Fiske points out, a CD sitting on a shop shelf is just a media artifact (Border/Lines, 1990/91), a group of people dancing to it are articulating their cultural selves. I use the term articulation in the manner suggested by Stuart Hall: articulation refers both to utterance and making linkage, and in the latter sense articulating self- and group-identity in relation to a broader sense of culture (1986). (The metaphorical root of linkage comes from a British usage: apparently the cab and the trailer of a lorry (truck) are articulated together). If we want our learners to articulate themselves in our classrooms, we need to learn more about what fuels their fires, what drives them and what troubles them.

Ultimately, this is what a cultural studies agenda for media education demands. Cultural Studies, as articulated at the CCCS (Birmingham School) in the 1960s was a form of engagement with cultural processes and historical change. It had emerged from the adult education classrooms of the 1950s and it always had as an underpinning an attempt to engage with the culture of the people—or the moment—without resorting to hierarchization of elite and popular cultures. In ‘Notes on Deconstructing “the Popular,”’ Stuart Hall argued that popular culture and high culture were not simple fixed inventories that stand in static relation to one another, but rather the distinction between them and the actual contents of each, were actively articulated in social practice. In other words, these are not distinct registers to which differing cultural practices belong, but ways of categorizing and policing difference, and hence an exercise of cultural power. What counts and what is excluded as knowledge in school and other educational settings mirrors to some extent the patterns of legitimation and exclusion that take place in the culture at large (Bourdieu et Passeron, 1964). It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the broad and multiple set of practices and processes that help to determine how school knowledge is selected, legitimated and institutionalized. The point rather is to underscore the potential for media education and popular culture to modestly destabilize existing power relationships in the classroom, to be a point of entry into discussions that engage matters relating to everyday life in the cultures youth inhabit.

The point is not to glorify popular culture artifacts and practices, to suggest that they could somehow stand in for the inherited curriculum, but just to recognize that they can mobilize the hopes, dreams and fears of the young people in our classrooms. The Michael Jordan and Bono moments represent what Raymond Williams called a “structure of feeling.” Or, perhaps they circulate within a cultural moment as resonant metaphors. Williams intended with this term to express something “firm
and definite as ‘structure’ suggests, yet [that] operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity” (1961, 48). The structure of feeling is “a particular sense of life, a particular community of experience hardly needing expression through which characteristics of our way of life…are in some way passed” (48). It is not “possessed in the same way by the many individuals in the community,” nor is it “in any formal sense, learned” (48-49). Rather it is passed down through generations, each of which innovates from the last. Says Williams:

One generation may train its successor, with reasonable success, in the social character or the general cultural pattern, but the new generation will have its own structure of feeling, which will not have come ‘from’ anywhere… the new generation responds in its own ways to the unique world it is inheriting, taking up many of the continuities, that can be traced, and reproducing many aspects of the organization, which can be separately described, yet feeling its whole life in certain ways differently, and shaping its creative response into the new structure of feeling. (49)

Williams argued strongly against fetishized, reified stand ins for cultural experience, especially through the commodification of the marketplace: “the strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is [the] immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products” (1977, 128). The packaging of Michael and Bono as products to be consumed gets in the way of seeing them as vehicles for understanding the convergence of certain worldviews, attitudes, feelings and ideologies at a particular historical juncture. But this is exactly why I argue against reading these figures as commodified objects whether as stars, celebrities or corporate pitchmen. Rather, I am making the case that they are simply reflections of our cultural selves and hence symbolic of structures of feeling read against specific historic backdrops.

To undertake a cultural studies analysis on Bono in a grounded manner we have to get beyond Bono’s multicoloured shades, his beaten-up cowboy hat and his public performances, both in U2 concerts and on the world stage. We have to consider what he represents, the structure of feeling to which he corresponds. In this light, I argue that Bono is a profoundly contradictory character, that he represents an historical period with no easy answers, an epoch of cultural and economic flux when contradictory worldviews are a reasonable response to social, cultural and economic conditions in which youth find themselves. Paul Willis (1990) speaks of the “necessary symbolic work at play” of young people grappling to make meaning in a period of profound change (1990). Reflected in, and refracted through, Bono, this “necessary symbolic work” of youth identity formation coalesces with the expression of critical youth voice on some of the more pressing social and cultural issues of the day.

In his book Common Culture (1990), Willis argues for a conception of media and consumer production that has less to do with DJs and VJs than fans on the street and in their homes. Willis argues for a principle of “symbolic creativity” that involves a bricolage, or mixing, of products and practices, of posters, clothing
styles and musical tastes. It is a creativity in the reception of television and music that eschews a one-size-fits-all interpretation. It is, to all extents, a broad act of reading the popular and the vernacular, a symbolic form of encoding the body, the place one lives and the streets one haunts. Willis is ruthless in his critique of cultural theorists who do not share his vision of a new symbolic creativity alive in all of its contradiction:

Mistaking their own metaphors for reality, they are hoist by their own semiotic petards. They are caught by—defined in professionally charting—the symbolic life on the surface of things without seeing, because they are not implicated in, the necessary everyday role of symbolic work, of how sense is made of structure and contradiction. (1990, 27)

Willis calls in effect for a theory of youth writing that is not a literacy as much as a social and cultural semiotic. This approach to youth writing, and the reading of youth writing, offers up for analysis an explosion of youth expression that helps to fill in the gaps missing from more traditional readings and forms of reading.

Reading the contradictions in the lives of youth, and youth lives as profoundly contradictory, opens up a way of seeing young people that is less condemnatory and more forgiving. Ultimately, it is important to mark the uneven development that distinguishes people’s mediations with their social reality. An impure criticism must grapple with the contradictions and signal the differences which exist between young people. Perhaps, for example, some youth who are particularly compelled by the circuits of consumer culture have succeeded in foreseeing a future of under-employment in the growing service sector, and are getting the headstart that they will need to sustain the consumer desires which older generations or richer kids have been able to take for granted. Some young people enact performative selves through clothing choices—this might be a hip hop styling, a queer celebratory identification, a grunge statement, or just a working class kid trying to fit in by wearing expensive jeans—and these are entirely expressive choices of style, neither more nor less than body design and performance of identity selves. Whatever the case, it is too simplistic, too deterministic to give up on a generation just because it is buying in, to some extent, to the dreamworld of consumption.

The question arises when reading youth lives whether there is an incipient ethos or politics which coexists with participation in consumer and mainstream media culture. Given the permeation of corporate values into every sphere of everyday life, it is necessary to ask if youth even have access to the language in which they could articulate their social concerns. Of course, the term ‘youth’—its masculinist bias notwithstanding—yokes together an enormous array of young people who have diverse experiences and histories. Arguably, young people are highly conscious of the many social, economic and environmental problems they will inherit. The shifting sands of economic fortune in North America create the conditions of possibility for new emancipatory agendas by linking diminishing economic prospects
for young people with the collapsing of the social safety net and environmental degradation. As much as we wish to contest economic determinism, the incipient ethos we are describing is emerging right from under our noses in the mothballed factories, in the specter (or, for some young people, the reality) of homelessness, the rise of terrorism and the resurgence of warfare, and finally in the deceptively beautiful but rapidly despoothing environment.

The problem for educators and cultural workers becomes one of teasing out the incipient critique which is only waiting to be articulated. To ignite the imaginations of young people, or to scaffold their emergent consciousness in imaginative ways, it is important to concede that the rhetoric of social change of an earlier generation does not resonate in the same way today. Without buying in to the dominant narratives of the Left, or the mythologizing of the end a social consciousness somehow tied to the 1960s, it seems nonetheless that we educators cannot simply impose our slogans on to young people. The fire must burn from within emergent consciousnesses and fresh songs and symbols. If educators are to understand the nature of today’s contradictory popular politics, in order to engage young people in dialogue, we must be willing to learn. Talking about Bono in the classroom will not solve all of these problems. In fact, for some students, it will appear meaningless and out of touch. Given the fine distinctions made by young people over popular culture choices, and the highly resonant nature of music as a descriptor and symbol of self- and group-identity, Bono’s popularity will be limited to only some students. But his performance away from the mic, the stewardship of economic and health issues through some of the world’s most important political forums, is certainly worth taking up. And his status as rock star—even among non-fans—would be likely to invigorate debate and study of some of the compelling social and economic problems of the day.

Bono is but one of many media moments worthy of study in media education contexts. The best media education is dialogic and foregrounds the background and experience of the learner (Buckingham, 2003). It is a humbling fact of media education contexts that educators can not know everything and require the active involvement of learners to pursue the multitude of topics that arise in the study of the media and the cultures in which it is situated. Media educators do need to have the conceptual tools to undertake analysis and interpretation of media texts and the sources of media production. As well, media educators increasingly need to have the capacity to produce media of all types though the interesting wrinkle that has emerged as new technologies became cheaper and more accessible is that learners across multiple spectrums began to come into media education settings with adequate or better knowledge bases in production. This too has revolutionized media education settings and unsettled the relationship between teacher and learner. Ultimately, what media educators need more than almost anything else is an open mind and the capacity and desire to read youth writing their lives. It is in reading youth writing the everyday that the pedagogy of possibility grows wings and prepares to take flight in new social futures and new creative lives.
References


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critical multicultural education (Sleeter, 1996), and feminist pedagogy (Ropers-Huilman, 1998; Shrewsbury, 1993; McCall, 1994). Submissions to this special issue on “Womanist Pedagogy: Defining the Theory and Practice” should address these and other related questions:

- What is the relationship between womanist theory and pedagogy and other critical theories and pedagogies? What are some points of tension and challenges in applying womanist theory to pedagogy?

- In what ways have the experiences of women and men and men of color informed their pedagogies and leadership styles? In what ways does womanist theory frame and position their work?

- Who can be a womanist? What is the literature’s current definition of womanism? What does womanist pedagogy look like?

Manuscripts should be theoretical or research-based, and engage womanist theory relative to pedagogy. Articles should be no more than 1000 words in length, including references. Please follow Taboo submission guidelines. All manuscripts will be peer-reviewed.

Pre-submission inquiries and finalized manuscript submissions should be directed by e-mail to Dr. Djanna Hill at hilld@wpunj.edu

*Timeline for Special Issue*

July 15, 2007: Deadline for Submissions
August 31, 2007: Deadline for Reviews
September 15, 2007: Manuscript Acceptance/Rejection
October 31, 2007: Authors Return Revised Manuscripts
November 30, 2007: Introduction and Revised Articles Go to Editor
Negotiation and Resistance
amid the Overwhelming Presence
of Whiteness:
A Native American Faculty and Student Perspective

Angela Jaime & Francisco Rios

Introduction

Home’s the place we head for in our sleep.
Boxcars stumbling north in dreams
don’t wait for us. We catch them on the run.

—Louise Erdrich

This opening stanza of the poem Indian Boarding School: The Runaways by Louise Erdrich (1984) describes the importance of and comfort with returning to one’s home, “the place we head for in our sleep.” In this poem, Erdrich describes the dreams of Native students who runaway from their boarding school experiences (for a detailed account of the culturally horrific, indeed even fatal, boarding school experiences, see Spring, 2006). But the runaways are also moving toward something: their homes where they can be culturally, socially, and spiritually nourished. Home is where the center of the soul belongs. Children of the boarding school experience recount how their time there devastated their ability to communicate and connect with their people back home. In many ways the present day experience of Native college students recalls the similar challenges of being away from family and home.

While not wishing to minimize the intensity of the experiences of Native students in boarding schools in the first half of the 20th century, there is much in common with Native students and faculty who find themselves amidst the overwhelming presence of Whiteness on many universities across the U.S. While attendance at the boarding school was forced (indeed, often times children were stolen from their families and homes) and while corporal punishment was used to imprison Native children, the current higher education experience can have many similar psychological influences on Native students and faculty. There is the physical distance of one’s homelands. And with this distance comes both cultural isolation and social segregation. It includes attacks on one’s ethnicity, one’s own identity, and the very
real possibility that one will internalize his/her own oppression. Just like boarding school students, the higher education experience requires both negotiations with oneself and with others to assure that one's integrity is left intact as much as possible. And it sometimes calls for outright resistance to those things and those people who violate one's integrity (Kohl, 1994). It should not surprise us, then, if Native Americans in higher education institutions also voice the challenge of distance from family and the comfort of home on their psychological well being.

The likelihood is that those who successfully negotiate the academic requirements and find themselves on post-secondary campuses will find themselves one of a significantly small few. And while the choice to attend a post-secondary school is voluntary, Native faculty and students must still negotiate the rough cultural, social, and spiritual terrain where they find themselves. This sometimes, as described earlier, also requires one to resist the oppressive social, institutional and societal racism (Schurich & Young, 1997) that they are sure to encounter.

This study focuses on how one Native faculty member and one Native student negotiated and resisted the cultural context of their primarily White university campus. We will detail the everyday challenges both face as well as the constant psychological struggle each face while interacting with their peers and colleagues. The research question of interest is: How did two Native people (one a faculty member, one a student) negotiate their cultural isolation and still attend to their teaching (for the former) and learning (for the latter) responsibilities? And, when called upon, how did these two participants resist the prejudicial and oppressive phenomena they encountered on their campus? In sum, identifying the oppression and becoming conscious of the efforts to decolonize oneself of the tyranny faced is the phenomena under discussion.

**Literature Review**

**Decolonization**

The literature regarding theories of decolonization addresses issues of colonialism, colonization, and capitalist expansion, all of which relate to how power is used and maintained within the dominant culture. Decolonization is the stripping of that which detains us, holds us, and prevents us from negotiating our own destiny and allows us to transcend to a place of balance and peace (Mohanty, 2003; Smith, 2001). The concepts of stripping, detaining, and oppressing are not new in feminist theory by women of color (Hernández & Rehman, 2002), in Native epistemology (e.g., Allen, 1992), and in cultural studies (Grossberg, 1997), and their importance has been established in the structure of Native identity development and, for our purposes, we extend them to Native faculty and students’ definition of self and identity.

Decolonization theorists (see, for example, Poupart, 2003) explain that in the process of decolonizing one’s identity, moments of realization and change occur. In these moments the individuals come to identify their oppression, they must then make one of two decisions about the way in which they will proceed: acknowledge the
oppression yet do nothing or question and resist the oppression to the eventual point that they are liberated. This has been summarized as a “formulation of decolonization in which autonomy and self-determination are central to the process of liberation and can only be achieved through a self-reflective collective practice” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 8). Self-reflective collective practice recognizes “…the transformation of the self, reconceptualization of identity, and political mobilization as necessary elements of the practice of decolonization” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 8). When decolonization is valued and pursued, the person must reconsider the perspective of the dominant group on issues by interrogating the heterosexual, patriarchal, colonial, racial, and capitalist influences in their own daily lives (Mohanty, 2003). When individuals begin to question the way society advances stereotypes and deliberate lies about marginalized groups, they come to the point of interrupting the cycle of socialization (Harro, 2000) and begin the journey toward decolonization of self.

To define one’s authentic self, one must have the tools and support to do so. Mililani Trask (1995), speaking to the Indigenous Women’s Network, explained that decolonization of hearts and minds must come from the freedom to define self.

Self-determination as an international legal concept refers to the right of peoples to freely determine their political status and to freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. The exercise of one’s self-determination requires that there be true freedom of choice. This implies not only freedom from the external control of other sovereigns, but freedom from internal controls and psychological obstacles that are the legacy of past colonization. (p. 34)

When the colonized take the opportunity to define themselves, the process of decolonization can occur. Paulo Freire (1970) claimed that freedom of the people from internal controls and psychological obstacles of colonization liberates the people. Following the freedom from internal controls and psychological obstacles, Freire claims the liberation of the oppressed, by the oppressed, from within the oppressed group, must take place in order for there to be a fate and belief in the liberation. It is through this liberation that the oppressed become conscious of the internalized colonization that they have endured and make the choice to liberate themselves or to continue the cycle.

Decolonization of Identity

Our contacts with other people in our daily lives influence our perception of the world and of ourselves. The books we read, movies we watch, and music we listen to have various levels of power over our perceptions of self and others. We internalize the pieces of the world that influence us and help shape us to be who we are. This includes the way in which we interact with others and their influence on us. The oppression we face daily by those around us contributes to the colonization of our identity. As in the cycle of socialization, we must break the continuum of oppression we place on others and that which is placed on us.
Negotiation and Resistance

Oppression-Resistance-Negotiation-Transcendence is the process of liberation directed at fostering a sense of integrity. The action of resistance as an outsider is the only action at the oppression. Insiders within an oppressive system must achieve a tenuous balance of negotiation and resistance. Learning to find the balance is the challenge. One needs to think critically concerning the current issues of colonization. This is especially difficult given that the dominant culture resists the conversation about and reflection on current issues of colonization of Native people in the United States. To acknowledge and become conscious of the present state of colonization would foster the demand for social justice. To ignore this occurrence or to remain ignorant is to deny a responsibility to social activism.

Context

This study took place at a state university in the mountain west. The state is 89% White with Native Americans make up 3% of the state’s population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The state is also home of one of the largest Native reservations in the US shared by two Native nations. Notwithstanding, the reservation is nearly 300 miles away from the university which makes the recruitment and retention of Native students to the university campus challenging. Consider, for example, that in 2006, there were only 115 (0.9%) Native students on the campus (University, 2006). The number of Native faculty on the campus was equally problematic. From 2000-2003, there was only one Native faculty member on the campus. In 2003, one Native faculty (untenured) was hired and in 2004 two more were added.

Support for Native students on campus comes primarily from the American Indian Studies program, which offers an academic minor. The Office of Multicultural Affairs employs an American Indian Program Coordinator who provides support by organizing events for Native students, recruiting Native students, and supporting students academically through tutors, grade checks, etc. There are also two other Native groups: Keepers of the Fire and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society.

The two participants of this study were Jeanette and Marie (pseudonyms). Jeanette is an Assistant Professor in the College of Education having come to the campus in fall, 2004. Jeanette also served as one of the members of the research team. Her primary teaching responsibility is an educational foundations course with a strong multicultural focus. Marie is a sophomore, a recent enrollee, in the university having moved from New Mexico to the state and was a student in Jeanette’s class in fall, 2005. Both agreed to share their perspectives about teaching and learning in a predominantly White institution but to do so during the semester when they were involved in the foundations course so as to reflect upon phenomena, perceptions and interactions of each other.
Methodology

This qualitative study is aimed at getting at the meaning making process associated with phenomena as well as the role of contextual variables (in this instance, place and institutional culture) that impact that meaning making. More specifically the focus is on the teaching and learning experiences of two Native women on the university campus. Critical Ethnography (Ada & Beutel, 1993) was employed to assure that the experiences shared were as real and genuine to the participants as possible. A critical ethnography works to assure that the participants are active in shaping the research methodology (from question construction, to data analysis, to framing of the findings).

Data were collected via interview and an email journal (e-journal). The two researchers carefully constructed a series of questions that would serve as the interview guide. They were loosely structured on Schwab’s (1978) four commonplaces of schooling: teachers, students, curriculum and social milieu. The student was interviewed by Ricardo, the non-participant of the research team, to allow the student to freely share her thoughts about Jeanette. Ricardo also crafted a series of questions that he emailed to Jeanette regarding the four commonplaces of schooling. Attention was paid to the timeframe of the email question prompts: beginning, middle, and end of the course. The transcripts (for Marie) and the e-journal (for Jeanette) served as the data source for this study.

The data were compiled and qualitative data analysis followed an emergent grounded research approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We asked ourselves, as we looked at the data, “What is in this material?” We began with initial theoretical assertions anchored to the data. The themes that emerged were juxtaposed and melded to develop more robust, appropriate categories that allowed us to aggregate coded data and formulate hybrid theoretical assertions. Throughout we used each other to help define and understand these themes and theories.

Findings

Three main themes emerged from the data set. The first theme speaks to the negotiation of one’s identity and one’s culture within a specific context. The second theme addresses the need to transcend identities through resistance. The final themes are ideas clustered around the connection between culture and pedagogy. These themes will be described and specific elements from the data set will be used to bring these themes to life and provide greater depth of meaning.

The Negotiation of Identity and Culture

The first theme focuses on how one negotiates both his/her identity and culture in the context of an overwhelming whiteness. Important to the identity dimension of this theme is an understanding of how identities are both chosen and ascribed. In the
former, there is an interaction with one’s actual “racial” birth with how one chooses to define oneself. Marie’s description of this highlights both of these elements:

...my dad he is Latino and Apache and my grandpa he raised me off and on for my whole life and he knew how to speak Apache and he knew how to speak Spanish. So he taught me how to speak both, but mostly I speak Spanish...but I identify mostly as a Native American person because I believe that Latinos, unless they have a lot of Spanish ancestry, are mostly native people to me. So whenever I have to fill out the census or whatever, there is only one option I’ll check, Native American. (Interview, 11/05, p. 1)

Along with linkages to one’s family lineage, these identities are further affirmed and extended by way of strong cultural and community ties as well as through a spiritual connectedness. Marie describes some of these cultural and spiritual connections critical to her identity as a Native American:

I used to dance at the powwow...and I have a friend, she is a full blood (up on the reservation) and I told her it’s hard for me to sometimes have Indian friends because I’m so light skinned, you know, and they might think I’m a Guerra and so she said, “gosh, don’t worry about that Marie you have the heart of ten Indians.” I think it’s all your mentality and the way that you live with it and the way you carry yourself, the way that you speak and your beliefs. (Interview, p. 1)

Along with dancing at the powwow, Marie describes her other cultural activities including engaging in art projects (the making of a rattle from a deer hoof and a turtle shell), the passing of “advice” to younger generations, the food that one eats, as well as the activities she chooses not to engage in (in one instance, dissecting Owl pellets in science class due to the sacredness of Owls for her).

Because one’s identity, based as it is on lineage as well as cultural, social, and spiritual connectedness, can be variable, Jeanette is sensitive to identity questions but also provides space for students to negotiate identity on their own terms:

Over the past 8 years, I have had probably less than 20 minority students in my education classes. It is always a struggle for them in a class where they are the minority and we are talking about controversial “isms.” I feel defensive for them at times and I find myself protective of them. I have not approached them about their ethnicity but rather opened myself up to the class about my heritage and ethnicity in order to alert them that they are not the only ones in the class. (E-Journal, p. 1)

Jeanette realizes that there is a risk, especially on a predominantly White campus, with revealing one’s identity. This is true even for her as the professor in the class:

I sometimes don’t tell them I am Native. In fact in grad school as a TA I would tell them in the first 3-4 weeks and then at the end of the semester on my evaluations they would write things like Jeanette is a bitter Indian woman” or this Indian has no business in the classroom. I felt bad about myself and really disliked my students for using my ethnicity to try and hurt me. I know it is their ignorance but it was a choice I had in providing them with that information. (E-Journal, p. 2-3)
Both Jeanette and Marie discuss the importance of being true to one’s self as well as the need to have a positive cultural self-identity since one’s cultural connectedness can provide both a source of comfort and provide an “internal” centeredness. Jeanette when asked what she would hope ethnic minority students would say about what they learned in her class described it thusly:

Maybe they would say Dr. Jeanette was honest with us….Diversity is a no-brainer….they would definitely say they learned a lot about Native education and issues, teaching to a variety of learners and how to break the cycle of socialization. Their own ethnic self? Maybe that they have an ethnic self. I think the students of color are aware of their heritage or ethnic identity…. (E-Journal, p. 7)

For Marie, being true to oneself might mean not being part of the mainstream:

…but many of the one’s I see are always true to their values regardless if they stick out like a sore thumb, they are going to stay that way because it’s been so many hundreds of years that it’s the way they have been, you know, why change now and then. (Interview, p. 4)

Because both Jeanette and Marie are light skinned and both are operating in a predominantly White university and local community, both are challenged with the ways in which they can “pass” as being White as well as how others ascribe their identities. While this has the potential to protect one from harm (for Marie she thinks she does not face as much marginalization since “it’s easier for me because I’m light skinned,” Interview, p. 10), it also is a source of tension and a site of pain. For Marie this includes being told racist things (what Myers and Williamson, 2002, describe as “private racism”) because someone thinks you are White: “…when you’re light skinned you hear all kinds of stuff and if they don’t know where you are from or who you are they will say ugly things. And if you’re hearing it, it will break your heart” (Interview, p. 15). Consider the following excerpt from Jeanette as she describes this same challenge to her identity:

For my entire undergrad experience I had…(a non-ethnic last name)...and that in many ways it gave me a place to decide whether I wanted to speak up and identify. It seems to me now to have been a passing game I wish I would never have considered playing, yet I did. (E-Journal, p. 2)

After she married and carried her husband’s Latino surname, this challenge continued:

…so I can easily “hide” in my husband’s culture. But what does that say about me and my identity when I act as if I am not proud of who and what I am? I was raised better than that and have tried to “hide” my true ethnicity only once. I decided at the beginning of the semester that I would not tell them out-right that I am Native and then ask them at the end of the semester what they thought. Only one student guessed right. She wasn’t even confident in her answer, yet said she had a feeling. After class that day I asked her why she guessed Native? She replied, “I am too.”
I went back to my office that day and cried. I cried not because I felt ashamed of myself and what I had robbed myself of being true but what I may have done to alienate this young Native woman. Life plays sick games. I realized it wasn’t about me telling students what or who I am but how I build relationships with them. I have to be honest with them if they are ever going to be honest with me. I tell my students now that I am Native but I do it in a way that makes me feel comfortable. (E-Journal, p. 3)

For Marie there are the challenges to her identity by other Native Americans (because she is also half White), challenges by White teachers about what represents authentic or beautiful Native American art, and times where she silences herself rather than speaks up. And, she discusses the challenge of taking the harder path by choosing NOT to assimilate into the mainstream. Marie describes assimilation thusly:

The mothers might be like, “well, it’s kind of easy to live that way so maybe I’ll adapt this and adapt that” and you know what I mean even though it’s easier. It’s easier to live that way and it’s tempting. I mean to do it in my own life too. I don’t know, but I think there is a lot of strong native people who do (resist assimilation). Especially the Grammies, the Grammies just outright refuse. (Interview, p. 4)

For both Jeanette and Marie social networks (elders, families, and friends, especially other ethnic minorities) become even more critical. Marie mentions that she has few friends on campus and so turns toward her family as her main social support:

I don’t have any friends but, I really haven’t been making that attempt to have them. You know, I mostly just focus on my family and my extended family and my friends that I already have. I would like to have friends, but I haven’t had a friend that isn’t a minority since probably middle school and I’m afraid to try to go that route again. (Interview, p. 15).

For Jeanette the small circle of friends on the campus is vital to her identity and resilience:

I told you I feel like I have found friends and family here who are people of color who have come from similar places and “understand” me. For the first time I feel like I can be myself all the time around them. I am not the only Native in the group...Corky (another Native American professor) helps to bring balance in the circle. I have searched out and found diversity which affirms my place in the world on many levels. (E-Journal, p. 5)

The other source of identity support and affirmation comes by way of feeling you can make a contribution to others (both within but also beyond the family). As mothers, both Marie and Jeanette understand the importance of the impact they have on their children’s identity and sense of place in the world. But they both, multiple times, discuss the importance of looking out for the next generation. Jeanette says:

I teach about the issues because I am Native and I want my Native children to live in a world I feel I have influenced, even if that is only minimal. The difference
between me and other minorities? I think it is the way I was raised and what I have learned from elders and my culture that makes me different. Essentially I would hope that all of us, minorities, would want the same outcome on our individual issues: recognition that our issues are important and heard as well as our children affirmed. This is simplistic but in a small way true. (E-Journal, p. 4)

For Marie it’s the kind of impact she might be able to make especially as a teacher:

Well, I want to get them young, you know, when they…you can still make a good impression on them and kind of give them experiences that they’re not going to get unless I’m out there. I’m not saying I’m great or anything but I think I can offer them something that some other teachers might not want to make the attempt or the effort, you know. (Interview, p. 12-13)

**Revitalizing Identity Through Resistance**

One of the critical aspects of liberation (Harro, 2000) which assists in breaking the cycle of hegemonic socialization is to push against those aspects of racism and prejudice (interpersonal, institutional, and ideological) that violate one’s integrity. This is no easy feat since it involves transcending social norms including challenging social group stereotypes. But it is also equally influenced by the purposefulness and direction one can achieve by attending to “uplift” one’s culture and nation.

Both Jeanette and Marie discuss the ways in which they both resist the racism that they encounter in their lives but also the ways in which they attempt to advocate on behalf of their communities. At the center of this resistance is a keen recognition of the role of power. Jeanette described this sensitivity in her e-journal when recounting how students in the class visit the Denver Public Schools whose students are dominantly ethnic minority:

It is inevitable that I will get over half my White students saying how they were the minority in the classroom in Denver…However, contextualizing the way the term minority is used in my class and in the area of social justice/multicultural education/critical race theory the use of the word by my White students is most problematic. I am constantly asking them to problematize their response to “being a minority” in a classroom when they are still the majority. Spatial and physical sense of minority are very different than the mental or consciousness of states, especially when we discuss the issue of power and privilege related to the perspective of ethnic minorities in society. (E-Journal, p. 9)

For both Marie and Jeanette then, resistance becomes a form of strength, something one needs to do for oneself and for others. Marie describes this best in recalling her initial response to being on campus. She wanted to return home. After talking with her husband, however, she decided that she needed to stay on and struggle, for herself and for her daughter:
Then I see my little girl and I figure if I’m hiding out trying to be just around my own people, like in Farmington, it was easy, I always felt comfortable. Here, gosh I just wanted to go home, I just wanted to drop out. And I’m thinking, my little girl, if she sees me struggling and she sees me ruffling some people’s feathers, she’s gonna see me as strong; she’s gonna be the same way....And I look at her and think that’s how I’m gonna make it through this place. (Interview, pp. 11-12)

Resistance comes in a variety of forms as Jeanette and Marie detail. There is resistance in the act of self-defining and self-determining one’s identity as a Native American. Then the person’s mere presence becomes a challenge to the status quo. Jeanette describes it thusly:

How many times do you think my or any other professor’s (who is not Native) students have had interactions with an educated, strong, Native woman teaching them about diversity issues? My examples of teaching are different, my experiences are different, my supplemental material in the classroom is different. Too many times I feel like Native people are an afterthought in everyone’s minds, the mere fact that I am in front of them with a PhD is testimony that Native people are not all drunks, unemployed and uneducated. (E-Journal, p. 4)

But probably more than anything else, resistance comes by way of speaking out via radical truth telling, critical questioning, and de-centering the master narrative as described by Marie and Jeanette. Marie shares the following:

…I’m just like, “no, I’m gonna speak out” because they need to hear it. And if they get uncomfortable, oh, so what, that’s my job. (Interview, p. 3)

Sometimes, this even involves asking the teacher to assure that the Native American viewpoint is included in class lectures. Discussing a human development course she took at a different college, Marie recounts:

In human development, the teacher would always try to just rush through areas...and whenever she tried to do that we would always raise our hands, “Wait, we have something to say about human development from our point of view.” (Interview, pp. 9-10)

Jeanette has the additional methods of resistance by way of the opportunity she has to shape the curriculum and advance new knowledge, which necessitates the negotiation of what she studies and how she engages in scholarly activity with her broader pedagogical goals of promoting de-centered/critical thinking among her students, especially the students of color. Jeanette discusses how she works to de-center the dominant group’s experiences and to replace it with the experiences of ethnic minorities:

Too often the conversation is focused on White men and women in the center and people of color are discussed only in relation to the Whites. I find this problematic in many ways; I see this same pattern when Native people are discussed in history or even present day, women of color are seen as the followers of the White women
in the feminist movement when in actuality Chicana's and African American women were already struggling and active in the equality movement. Feminism is also a White woman’s word and theory. It is exhausting thinking of the overwhelming number of times, in my own life, I have been in circles of people and colleagues where the center of the conversation is always about the White people and we are on the peripheral. In my class, I think the (minority) students realize they are not on the peripheral, but rather the center and White people are discussed in relation to them. (E-Journal, p. 8)

In describing the class they share, Marie describes how Jeanette engages in radical truth telling:

I enjoy her, she makes me laugh because she’s not afraid to say things just bluntly.
I like that, it makes it funny instead of so serious. (Interview, p. 6)

She goes on to confirm how the center of attention has shifted in Jeanette’s class:

Then they’re kind of forced, unless they completely plug their ears or block them out. Then they are forced to hear things and think things that they might not have never thought or heard before. (E-Journal, p. 12)

Beyond shaping curriculum, Jeanette realizes she has power as a role model who can show students it is possible to have a strong cultural identity and resist destructive ideologies and still be successful. Jeanette states:

Ideally, my students of color would say they learned to be strong and stand up for themselves. I want them to feel confident and affirmed in my class, without having to fight and struggle for it against the “establishment.” They are important and I want them to know that without question. (E-Journal, p. 7)

This resistance against dominant and destructive ideologies is not easy. There are the personal costs associated with such resistance, which can lead, at times, to social ostracization since the net result is that colleagues and peers who have a stake in maintaining the status quo and its supporting hegemonic ideologies find themselves uncomfortable, and even provoked, when their worldviews are challenged. Marie describes students’ responses when she offers an alternative perspective in her classes which might challenge the other students’ standpoints:

It just depends on how they were raised; some of them get kind of uncomfortable and start shifting around their seat and flipping through stuff and kind of looking down because they are embarrassed or they’re uncomfortable and the other ones that are kind of genuine or sincere, at least half way there, will kind of show interest in it and that’s about it. (Interview, p. 3)

Connecting Culture and Pedagogy

Because both Jeanette and Marie share a similar professional interest in teaching, the opportunity to discuss teaching and learning was provided to illuminate the ways in which they think about the connection between culture and pedagogy.
They discussed philosophical, relational, pedagogical and curricular dimensions of teaching with a lens on phenomena that promote cultural continuity as well as those which create cultural discontinuity. They also discussed the interaction of ethnic minority teachers with ethnic minority students.

With respect to philosophical considerations around teaching, Marie describes the importance of learning for the sake of passing down wisdom, knowledge and beauty. She says:

I don’t know if it just (describes) native people but, I notice that people are not so worried about having authority. You know what I mean? It’s not like you get so much pleasure off of that. I think more, especially elderly Native people, get more pleasure out of just sharing but not at that level to where it’s out of fear, but it’s just out of… beauty. You know? (Interview, p. 6)

She then broadens this out to include ethnic minority teachers:

…when you experience a class with a teacher that is a minority, it seems more like they’re not worried about being in control. They’re just more worried about getting their point across and learning. (Interview, p. 8)

This speaks to a second dimension of learning associated with teaching: the relational element. There was much discussion about the importance of developing a sense of community, and with it, the importance of respect (openness without pretense). Jeanette describes how respect, a core cultural value for her, plays itself out in her interactions with her students:

I think my heritage has taught me a lot about how to treat people. I respect my students and have learned over the past ten years of teaching college students that showing you care and respect them is essential to them listening and considering what I have to offer them. I am constantly saying in class that they do not have to subscribe to what I am teaching them in class, but I expect them to consider it and reflect on its meaning. I also expect each student to listen to one another and respect each other. (E-journal, p. 8)

Marie, who agrees that respect is a common cultural core value, also points to its importance in the context of schooling despite the fact that she also is quick to share the ways in which she has experienced disrespect in her learning (most notably in her high school experience). However, in describing the class she shared with Jeanette, Marie stated:

…she’s just normal, regular; she doesn’t try to, you know, she just speaks to us like on our level rather than be afraid of her and things like that. And I appreciate that, cause it doesn’t make it feel like she’s superior, you have to be afraid of her or things like that. You can just learn from her out of mutual respect rather than just in fear. (Interview, p. 6)

A third element of teaching-learning described by Marie and Jeanette concerns the pedagogical strategies that they find valuable and noteworthy and that
allow for variation and freedom within the classroom. More specifically, Marie identified storytelling, especially real life experiences, as a key pedagogical strategy but most frequently discussed the importance of hands-on/experiential learning, especially outside the classroom. In describing teachers who utilize these strategies, Marie says:

You’re excited to go to their class that day instead of dreading it and they give you the opportunities to learn in ways other then just lectures, you learn, learn in ways that are not the familiar ways…you get to learn with your hands on, you get to experience. (Interview, p. 5)

For Jeanette the focus was on a pedagogy associated with spurring dialogue and critical thinking. In considering the impact that this has on ethnic minority students, she relates:

My pedagogical philosophy is to open the classroom up to a discussion of self reflection and dialogue…I really discourage students to write what they think I want to hear. It bothers me to think what I am reading is only to please me and not for them to reflect and learn about their own bias beliefs. I think my students of color are more comfortable in a classroom setting with me as the teacher when they speak up against the tide of the class. (E-Journal, p. 8)

Jeanette also discusses curricular considerations when she teaches. For her, an important knowledge dimension for students in her class is to learn about oppression and resistance. She describes it in this way:

Concerning content: I would like them to say they learned the frustrations and realizations of education through the current political climate, solutions for themselves as to how to survive the frustrations and struggles of education, and to have passion about teaching and advocacy for students.

Concerning themselves: I would like them to say they learned a lot about themselves and what they believe their strengths and weaknesses are when thinking about race, class, and gender. It is my hope they take a journey to discovering things about themselves they either did not know or had not explored beyond the surface. (E-Journal, p. 1).

Marie, at multiple points in the interview, shares her appreciation for teachers that bring diversity into the classroom, teachers she most associated with being ethnic minority:

I think it comes in and out during the whole class…what the class is about. But it comes in a lot more than it would if the teacher had not been a minority, you know, and then relating things that maybe students wouldn’t normally relate to that subject matter, they’re gonna relate…So I think the subject is not just limited to that subject, but it’s fifteen subjects that, you know, feed into that one and that’s good. (Interview, p. 12)

As Marie relates, there are special teaching characteristics she associates with
ethnic minority professors. She finds them more attentive to diversity than non-minority professors; she also notices the fostering of cultural continuity that exists within their classrooms. Marie extends her description this way:

It’s not only that, it’s just that most minorities, I can’t say all but I think the majority, have experienced things that are not mainstream. So they have a lot more experience in just the human condition, you know… just living and suffering and loving and all those things are like so much more vivid because we feel them so much harder… It’s also you’re being enriched with all these things that you can only experience if you have certain blood running through your veins. (Interview, pp. 8-9)

The net result of this cultural continuity is that the students feel more relaxed and able to participate in the class. Marie, in describing her experience in Jeanette’s class, relates:

I just feel like… just more relaxed. You know, it’s like I raise my hand a lot more in her class than any other class because I don’t feel like she’s gonna judge me, like maybe some other professor would. (Interview, p. 17)

From Jeanette’s perspective, cultural continuity is an important goal that she pursues; yet she also thinks it’s important to challenge her ethnic minority students as well:

I think my students of color are more comfortable in a classroom setting with me as the teacher when they speak up against the tide of the class. My only student of color this semester is really shy but I feel like she spoke up because she knew she was not the only one. Additionally, I think the other students did not argue or speak against her because they knew she was Native and that I am Native and that I most likely would have supported her in the class. Now, the two of us having the ethnic and cultural connections that we do did not keep me from challenging my student and her thinking, but in a respectful and positive way. (E-Journal, p. 8)

While having ethnic minority students is welcomed overall, Jeanette has feelings of ambivalence based on her own experiences as “the only” ethnic minority student in a class:

When I see surnames that might be ethnic minority students I get both excited and apprehensive. I am excited because there are so few minority students in my education classes. It is refreshing to have minority students in a classroom where I am not the only minority. I am apprehensive to have minority students in a class where controversial discussions of race, class, and gender are discussed. If the student is physically identifiable as a minority then I am even more apprehensive that the other students will expect them to be experts or that they will hold back asking questions about the topics we discuss. (E-Journal, p. 1)

Because of this, Jeanette is more “protective” of these students:

I never want my students to feel ashamed of their heritage or who they are but I also don’t want them to feel as though because they are brown they have to speak
up for everyone else who is brown or to constantly educate the White folks. I have
a lot of shit to deal with in my identity and past, but there is one thing I am sure of
and that is that I will always protect my students of color from being marginalized
and critiqued in my class. Maybe it is my motherly instinct or maybe it is just part
of my cultural upbringing. (E-Journal, p. 2)

A special challenge for Jeanette is dealing with those ethnic minority students
who have taken what Marie described as the “easy course,” the path of assimilation.
Attendant to that assimilation, most frequently, is internalizing the racist ideology
that is socialized into them:

Some of the students I have had in the past who have challenged me in my think-
ing and teaching have been those with internalized racism. What do you say and
how do you handle the situation of a student of color who devalues the statistics
of how few people of color attend college. I have had a number of women of color
who have said that they worked just as hard if not harder to get to college and the
“other” minorities should have too as well. What can I say when they voice this in
the classroom in front of their White peers—reaffirming the colonialist perspec-
tive!!!! For me it means that I have to find another way of presenting the material
to them in class or having a conversation with them outside of class. And a few times
it means I have lost them. What can I do? There have been a few who I thought
I had lost and whom had come back to me years later saying they changed their
perspective on life after the class was over. (E-Journal, pp. 6-7)

Describing how she deals with this, Jeanette discussed the importance of not seem-
ing argumentative, of presenting issues in a more open-ended way, and of providing
space for student peers to also do some of the educating.

Discussion

The negotiation of identity and culture is difficult and tenuous. Both Marie
and Jeanette construct and express their identity through both ascribed and chosen
factors. The ascribed factors include birth within the culture, cultural linkages they
have been given by their relatives and extended family, and resultant responsibility
to pass their culture on to the next generation. All three of these provide a founda-
tion for choosing one’s cultural identity in social settings outside of the family
circle. Native people have a choice about how to identify one’s cultural heritage
and connectedness to outsiders. It is through these choices Marie and Jeanette
have made that we see both assertive and passive resistance to the climate of a
predominately White institution. This passive resistance can appear as the mere
presence of the person in the classroom as one who identifies herself as Native.
The assertive resistance of one’s cultural identity comes when they assert their
voices and make it clear where they stand. Both Marie and Jeanette have used
their positions in the institution as student and faculty to point out racism and
unjust behavior. While they both have explained the situations as uncomfortable,
they also have expressed the responsibility to speak out and stand up for future generations.

The work Marie and Jeanette do within and out of their communities centers them as cultural workers (Freire, 1998) in their daily lives. On one level, their cultural work includes their conviction to educate outsiders in a way that preserves their culture and their Native sense of self. It also includes their work to continue to center “culture” as a critical element that must be understood in the teaching and learning process. At another level, however, being a cultural worker speaks to their commitment to cultural, political and economic justice that are linked in small and large ways to a broader struggle for full democratic citizenship.

The theme Marie and Jeanette continue to return to is the consciousness of their positions as mother, student, professor, wife, etc. These identity positions for Marie and Jeanette are fluid. They move in and out of each, sometimes occupying more than one at a time, with one thing constant: their Native sense of self. Each identity they express is not separate of each other but rather holistic of their cultural identity. Fluidity is a constant in both Marie and Jeanette’s lives. While identity negotiation occurs daily, it comes with psychological and social challenges. Psychologically, Marie and Jeanette resist oppressive acts but at what cost to their own identity? Marie and Jeanette are pushing the boundaries when they speak out against bigotry and the concomitant institutional racism that supports it. But there are costs associated with resistance, such as self-doubt, the anxiety over self-protection (associated with “hiding” one’s true self) and the attacks to one’s sense of self. Resistance is especially difficult when relationships with White students and colleagues are already fragile. To teach them without causing resistance (let alone getting them to support and understand one’s perspective), Jeanette and Marie must approach these relationships carefully. This does not mean that they have to compromise their beliefs; rather, they must always focus their resistance “in a good way,” in a way that seeks to enlighten and promote critical thought in others and oneself, in a way based on compassion, understanding and unity, and not on animosity, hostility or separation.

Throughout it all, it’s evident that both Marie and Jeanette maintain an optimistic view of themselves, of their professional possibilities and about education in general. Despite a bleak historical picture of education for most Native Americans, a historical framework that fostered education as an agent of colonization, despite the ever present culture of whiteness that devalues American Indian cultural resources, and despite the attempts to de-culturalize and assimilate American Indians, that both participants still value education and bring a sense of agency (rooted in courage) to their work, provides a powerful statement regarding the character of American Indians in general and American Indian women in particular.

We argue that this is possible because both participants are guided by cultural resources that provide the strength to persevere. These cultural resources include core cultural values of respect for self and respect for others, which manifest themselves
in doing all things in a good way. It is also possible, we argue, because of a cultural ontology that is collective and not individualistic. In this ontology, the self is intimately connected to significant others even when these others are not in one’s immediate presence. In this way, Marie and Jeanette represent something more than individuals, and that responsibility keeps them going. There is indeed power in their presence. Finally, the participants bring a cultural way of knowing that recognizes the need for an authentic education which results from radical truth telling and de-centering the master narrative. And complicit with that way of knowing is the understanding that greater academic achievement comes from alternative pedagogical strategies that strive to liberate and empower students rather than indoctrinate.

Ultimately, we should inquire about the role of context in Jeanette and Marie’s educational experience: how did this particular historical moment (hyper-conservative, anti-diversity, neo-liberal, and globalized) influence their perspectives? How did the rural, isolated, and mostly white, rocky mountain west locale influence their educational experiences? And, how has participating in a predominately white, university-level teacher education program influenced their viewpoints? These contexts illuminate the importance of negotiating the institutions of education, and as such are germane with what was said earlier regarding the Boarding School experience. The feelings of alienation and loss at the Boarding Schools for Native children, and the acts of resistance that strive to retain cultural dignity, even as that culture is being openly denigrated, is a constant struggle for Marie and Jeanette in their present day experiences. We come full circle to understand that while this is a different era, Native people are still struggling with similar acts and issues of oppression.

Imagine, for example, working where you’re not the only person of color but one of many because the institution was deeply committed to diversity as an essential educational value. Imagine engaging in a level of discourse with faculty and students wherein all are discussing in a sustained and authentic way opportunities and obligations that we all have to support those struggling to de-center whiteness and hegemonic ideologies, to provide a different perspective or to counter oppressive beliefs and actions as inappropriate to our democratic ideals. Imagine a climate of cultural caring that acknowledged the assets and strengths that these Native women (and, more broadly, racial minorities) bring that is evident in the educational institution.

For just a moment, Marie and Jeanette found cultural recognition, comfort, and strength in each other’s presence. So at end, we ask, imagine the possibilities of school as a cultural home. And imagine, no need to runaway.

Note

1 Colonialism “involves the consolidation of imperial power, and is manifested in the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands” (Boehmer, 1995).
References


Angela Jaime and Francisco Rios are professors in the College of Education at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.
Opening a Can of Worms: 
A Duo-Ethnographic Dialogue 
on Gender, Orientation, and Activism 

Darren E. Lund & Rachel E. Evans

Darren: I think this is the official start of the dialogue\(^1\) we’ve been talking about for a few months. Maybe we should set some guidelines and agree on how to start. If we’re being really honest and casual, like in typical email forms, will we be comfortable seeing these words in print someday? The idea is to learn more about something by talking about it with another person, a newer methodological stance that has been called \textit{duo-ethnography}. I learned more about it at an academic conference earlier this year (Sawyer & Norris, 2005) and have since begun to explore the notion further. I acknowledge Bill Pinar’s explorations of understanding self, expressed as \textit{currere} and extended by Rick Sawyer and Joe Norris (2004) to notions of our \textit{dialogic self}. In the real world we call it conversation I think! In fact I hope by focusing our dialogue in this way we can begin to move it beyond a discussion. I really like what Carolyn Ellis (1997) asserted about scholarly narrative writing; it can be “emotional, personal, therapeutic, interesting, engaging, evocative, reflexive, helpful, concrete, and connected to the world of everyday experience” (p. 120).

So our topic is growing up with notions of gender and sexual orientation, and how those are played out in our lives in different ways in different settings. I think it could be fun, cathartic and maybe even a bit risky. What do you think?

Rachel: Sounds good. From what I’ve read it sounds like you’re getting a lot of work done and being appreciated for it, too. That’s cool. I haven’t done much activism since I moved from Red Deer.\(^2\) Maybe I’ve gotten lazy or something, but I think it’s more the environment I’m in. I mean people on the whole here on Vancouver Island are so much more open-minded and less apathetic. I think in Red Deer I sort of had this feeling that if I didn’t get involved in certain causes and put my time in then nothing would happen. Sort of this “if I don’t do it nobody else will” kind of thinking. Here it seems that the activist scene is so, well, active, that it’s almost more difficult to become involved in—do you know what I mean? Plus
it just seems less dire, because I’m not dealing with the same kind of widespread bigotry on a more or less daily basis.

Darren: You know what? This is something we’ve been talking about at our meetings here. I’m in Toronto right now writing from my hotel room. I was invited to be on the selection committee for the Canadian Race Relations Foundation’s national Award of Excellence. Remember those folks? We went with your Mom in 2001 to Vancouver when Students and Teachers Opposing Prejudice (STOP) won one of their Awards of Distinction, and we presented about our program (Lund & Evans, 2001). It’s interesting being on the other side now, and getting to review so many good nomination packages and discussing all kinds of social justice issues in substantial ways. The historical and political context of the particular community is so vital in assessing the impact and importance of any social justice project.

I was also talking with some youth activists in London, Ontario last week (I’m traveling way too much) where I was conducting research on school activism. One of the participants was talking about how it’s easier to be an activist and mobilize people in a community when there is a tangible oppressive force, much like the “dire bigotry” you talk about in Central Alberta. I agree, as it seems so obvious why we have to do antiracism work in Alberta, so it will raise awareness and stimulate the community people to act. Or is it a convenient excuse for you now? I mean, there’s also “activist burnout” that some of my colleagues have talked about, even among young people.

By the way, do you feel comfortable knowing that these words could someday soon be part of a book on narrative method, or queer studies, or something like that? Of course we’ll both have the right to edit and revise and approve anything before we sent it.

Rachel: I’m pretty cool with that. It will probably hurt my chances of becoming a nun or a conservative Member of Parliament one day... but I think Folkporn (2005) probably did that already.

Darren: I look back with pride on the beginning of our Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) group under the STOP program, and I remember you were instrumental in getting it going. As you probably know, it was the first ever GSA program in the very conservative province of Alberta. Since then I’ve written a few pieces about it (e.g., Lund, 2004, 2005), encouraging other teachers to resist homophobia and try to make their schools safer for all students. What do you remember about why you took the initiative to get it formed?

Rachel: Here’s my version: I remember that the whole issue of homosexuality was a hot topic at Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School around the time that we started it, partly because David moved here from Ontario and he was the first openly gay person most people had encountered. He was a friend of mine, so it really pissed me off that he was being harassed constantly and that nothing was
being done about it. If I remember correctly, some students even went to [one of
the school’s vice-principals] about this and he did nothing to stop the harassment. I
believe he actually suggested that David should be less open about his sexuality. So
there was this feeling that homophobia was something to be quietly tolerated or that
the issue of homosexuality was to be left alone, lest we open a can of worms.

I didn’t, and still don’t think this was the right approach to it. It was to the point
that at least one student was being bullied because of his sexuality. I felt that kids
all around the school were talking about this issue and meanwhile the staff was
trying to pretend it wasn’t an issue at all. I felt really strongly that people should
be arguing about this and sharing their opinions but I also felt that people should
realize that regardless of their opinion, they did not have the right to react to the
sexuality of others with harassment or hostility. So I went to talk to you about
starting the GSA and you seemed enthusiastic so we did it.

I don’t think the meetings really took off the way I had hoped, but at least they
happened. I hope there were a few kids who felt supported by its existence. I guess
it worked on the principle that it’s more difficult to bully a group of people than it
is to bully one person alone. Which is sort of one way I look at STOP. I mean aside
from being a great activist group, it was a place for all of the “misfit” kids to eat
lunch. And I mean that in the most endearing way.

Darren: I never thought of you as misfits, but sure appreciated your “alternative” outlook on life! This account matches up with my memory of how it started,
and I remember how you and David really took a leadership role in all this. I think
it was you and [fellow teacher and STOP Advisor] Kirsten Spackman who went to
see [the school’s principal] to get permission for the meetings, and convince him
it wasn’t a gay sex club or something. It was just about finding a safe place to talk
about the discrimination faced by gay students, and of course, those suspected of
being gay. I liked how you and David ran the GSA meetings and set out some great
ground rules from the start. My inclination would probably have been to go around
the room and have people say why they were there, unaware of how insensitive that
might be. You and David started out by saying that no one had to declare anything
about their identities or why they were there, and that everything said in the meet-
ing was confidential. It helped set a trusting tone. I was surprised that we actually
attracted a dozen or so students to attend some of the meetings, considering it was
probably a pretty risky thing.

It helped that STOP had a good reputation in the school and some national
profile, and wanted to tackle this issue. The GSA was formed under that umbrella,
as a separate “committee” but members of one didn’t have to be members of the
other. I remember some of the events we planned, including a movie night where
we played some cool and kind of edgy films about being gay. I still can’t believe
we got away with that in Red Deer. I know the GSA also did a big poster campaign
in the school but that may have been the next year.
Rachel: Your recollections of the GSA seem to match my own. Except that I forgot a lot of it, and I forgot to tell you that I have a very poor memory! I don’t remember talking to the principal. I seem to think it was David and Ms. Spackman and that other beautiful Latino boy whose name I forget (I remember he looked gorgeous in drag). I do remember the poster campaign, though, because it was super fun and in retrospect, hilarious! I mean, do you remember how silly some of those posters were? And we made tons—totally plastered the school with these crazy homemade posters! I remember that a janitor tore some down, not out of prejudice, but because he had some weird philosophy on stereotypes that he felt the poster refuted. But I also remember that same janitor telling me he could communicate with pigeons…

Darren: Yes, some of the posters I remember said, “Homophobia is so Gay,” “I don’t care if you’re gay, straight, or Australian,” and my favourite: “Stop flaunting your heterosexuality” [this one was not approved by the principal].

One great memory I have is of local United Church pastor, Reverend Mark Green, offering to come and speak to the GSA meeting about a biblical message that wasn’t hateful or condemning. We invited him back another time, and I think that was the event that got that local “youth pastor” so upset. As you know, his hateful letter to the editor entitled “Homosexual Agenda Wicked” was published in Red Deer’s daily newspaper in June 2002. Just about a week later, a homosexual young man was gay-bashed in Red Deer, and it was the tipping point in my decision to file a formal human rights complaint against the reverend, and a separate one against the newspaper.

Rachel: Why don’t you tell what happened with those complaints, and the reverend’s backlash, to give an idea of some of the anti-gay hostility in Alberta?

Darren: Sure. I actually settled the complaint against the Red Deer Advocate newspaper in April 2004. The terms of the settlement are confidential, but after the settlement, the newspaper permanently changed their official letters policy, promising that it “will not publish statements that indicate unlawful discrimination or intent to discriminate against a person or class of persons, or are likely to expose people to hatred or contempt because of race, colour, religious beliefs, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, source of income, marital status, family status or sexual orientation.”

That reverend’s response to my complaint against his letter was to refuse Conciliation with the Alberta Human Rights Commission and, instead, forward his copy of the complaint materials to the media. In December 2002, the reverend launched a defamation lawsuit against me, seeking $400,000 in damages based on comments I was alleged to have made to a newspaper reporter for an article published in August 2002. The offending comments allegedly drew a parallel between the reverend and other known extremists from the Central Alberta region. The reverend also started a
website claiming he was under attack by a “gay activist professor” and arranged fundraising events to promote his views and raise money for his lawsuit against me. He continues to post inflammatory writings against me on a variety of websites. I found particularly chilling one warning: “This man, Darren Lund, needs to be stopped.”

My research with other activists has explored a number of sources of resistance to social justice work (Lund, 2006), and I’ve received threats in the past, so this wasn’t exactly a surprise. I hired a lawyer, so besides enduring the ongoing personal attacks, I am now faced with considerable legal bills. My lawyer has generously agreed to reduce fees, but legal expenses have already surpassed $30,000. There have been a few local fundraisers for me, so it’s been encouraging that I haven’t been alone in this struggle.

In early 2005, the pastor suddenly dropped his lawsuit against me. The human rights complaint against him has been under investigation for over four years now, and will finally be going before a Human Rights Panel in the coming months. The pastor continues to post illegal information about the complaint, spread lies about me, and write against homosexuals in a website for Concerned Christians Canada Inc., on a number of other related websites, and on radio broadcasts. I continue to receive numerous hateful emails, letters, and telephone calls about this matter.

Rachel: 30,000 bucks is a lot of money to have to pay just to defend yourself from this obvious attempt to intimidate you. I didn’t realize it was that much! Little does he know that your tenacious spirit and passion for fairness helps you to prevail while he, spiteful and weak-willed, will fall by the wayside. Seriously, I hope the situation improves for you. Too bad the GSA has petered out. It happens I guess. To be completely honest, even I was losing steam towards graduation.

Darren: Thanks. The GSA survived for a few school years, but has kind of dissolved in the past year or two. It takes some remarkable courage on the part of the student leaders, and the teacher-sponsors, to put themselves out there for a program like this, so it’s not too surprising that it has folded, but still very disappointing.

We agreed we might talk about identity. So why don’t I plunge in and ask you when you first started to think about your sexual orientation?

Rachel: It’s hard to say—when does anyone start thinking about it? Puberty I guess. I think I remember being very young, like 10 or something and hearing about gay rights issues on the news and thinking it was absurd that anyone would think a person could choose his/her sexual orientation. I guess I’ve always been a person who follows her heart rather than her head—and to me it just seemed so obvious that love and attraction were things that were sort of beyond human control. Also I think kids have that sort of sense of justice or fairness that adults sometimes talk themselves out of; I remember feeling it was totally unfair that one group of people would have different rights than others. So as a kid the whole queer thing seemed to be more of a fairness issue than anything. Then as I got older I started
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to think about the issue more in terms of how it related to me. Even though I was in a very close-minded environment, I was an open-minded, curious kid and my Mom always encouraged me to stay that way.

When I was about 14 my friend, Janeen, and I started to be curious about queer culture. We thought it would be really cool to have friends who were gay or even just to know people who were gay. I think it just seemed that gay culture was so connected to culture at large and an urban lifestyle that we were craving. It was like a novelty to us. Ironically our phys-ed teacher was totally open and comfortable about being a lesbian - but we weren’t really interested in her. We wanted a real queen... At that time I don’t think either of us was really thinking seriously about the reality of what it meant to be a gay person. We were just attracted to the flamboyant, gay culture that you see on TV.

Darren: Talk about a compelling narrative. Thanks for your candor here, Rachel, and for bringing back a flood of my own recollections about my early years, which were quite a few years before yours. In fact, recollections from when I was 14 are almost 30 years ago! Sounds scary though I’m starting to get used to this aging thing.

Here are some of my thoughts, brought out and probably shaped by yours. I remember being brought up in a home and a neighbourhood where monogamy and heterosexual relationships were the norm, the only option, and virtually all of the homes in my little world had two parents and a few kids. The neighbourhood is now better known for crime and lots of new Canadians, but back then it was a 1960s TV show kind of suburb. Only the widow across the street was an exception, an alternative family arrangement.

So it wasn’t a surprise I suppose that I was really encouraged to have a girlfriend as a kid. I think I fell in love with Wilma in kindergarten, when we were just five, and I remember her brother, Johnny, performing a kind of marriage ceremony between us one summer day in the back alley behind the garage. She used to write me love notes as we got older, pledging her love and a promise to marry me when we were both 22 years old. It all made perfect sense at the time, and I never wondered about this early compulsion to pair up.

I found a new love in grade four and spent the next eight years obsessing over LaDonna, finally settling for becoming her safe guy friend in high school. Throughout my childhood I was always strongly attracted to girls as objects of my devotion and attention, and I wonder now how much my family’s values were behind this drive to find a female life partner.

At the same time, I never felt masculine enough. My father was this big hulk of a man, an admittedly narrow-minded oil rigger turned city cop known to most people as “Moose.” He is still rather homophobic and has often joked about “gear-boxes”—the name he uses for gay men. He loved to impersonate the effeminate voice and limp wrist, and the juxtaposition of this stereotype with his typical gruff,
emotionally distant persona usually made us howl with laughter. But I was not a big kid. Kind of short for my age, I was chubby and had a squeaky voice all the way through junior high school. I remember when my Dad would take me to visit the police station, a typical remark would be, “Are you sure that’s your kid, Moose?” or, directed to me, “What the hell happened to you?” My Mom was more overt with her love for me, and her praise helped to mitigate the rough put downs that my Dad would casually throw at me as we did chores, went fishing, or worked in the garage. “You’re useless as tits on a nun” was one of his favourites, and I remember thinking it was kind of funny at the time.

Even my Mom would help reinforce certain gendered expectations of me. I remember her overhearing me talking on the phone and telling me that my voice sounded “too faggy,” and that I should try to talk with a deeper voice so people wouldn’t think I was a fairy. I think she thought she was being really helpful. My Mom also sat me down for a talk one day when I was in junior high and, already realizing I was almost a foot shorter than LaDonna now, feeling rather insecure about my developing masculinity. “Darren,” she said very seriously, “your father would be very disappointed if you were gay.”

So do you think this last blabber was a bit “confessional” or self-serving autobiographical junk? Reading it again, I’m a bit self-conscious of the tone.

Rachel: I think reading over the intimate/confessional writing that you’ve done makes everyone feel self-conscious. I don’t think it’s self-serving to tell a personal story like that—I actually think it’s the opposite. I tend to believe that it’s very important to try not to hold back when you’re expressing your inner world to another person. In general I think our culture is very self-conscious about expressing itself honestly—and I think our unwillingness to discuss sexuality is probably part of this. I actually found your e-mail touching. It reminded me of how narrow and skewed our perceptions of what it means to be male or female are. I’ve never thought of you as effeminate person—so it’s kind of weird to think that your parents would feel that way. I would just assume that you are a fairly sensitive person who’s not caught up in pretending or proving your maleness. But I would never interpret that as being gay.

It’s sad how ingrained those stereotypes are. When I first met one of my friends out here I thought he was gay because he has a lisp and he’s an artist. How stupid is that? And here I am, the kid who started a club to combat those kinds of stereotypes in high school! It just seems that certain stereotypes become fact in our heads without our even knowing it.

One kind of comical aspect that I picked out of your story was the part about your Dad impersonating a stereotypical gay person, and how it seemed so funny to see such a macho guy behaving that way. Isn’t the juxtaposition or melding of male/female qualities the same kind of humor that many drag queens rely on? So even though your Dad’s intentions were homophobic—he was actually doing a
sort of drag performance—similar to those that queer men have used in the past to make fun of gender stereotypes.

Darren: So, Detective Moose Lund as a drag queen. That’s hilarious! I’ll have to bring up your analysis at the next family dinner when Dad’s ranting about “gearboxes.”

I’ve actually had some interesting experiences over the years with my own drag queen experiences. One Halloween I thought it would be funny to go as a girl. I was about eight or nine years old, put a blonde wig on, lots of makeup and a dress, and went “trick or treating.” I was very disappointed in that most of our neighbours said something like, “Laurette, what are you supposed to be.” That hurt. Laurette is my sister, older by two years. So I had successfully impersonated my sister. We still regularly get recognized by people who know the other sibling, so I guess there is already a strong enough family resemblance without the help of the makeup!

My next sojourn into cross-dressing came in my first year of university. I was slim then, with longer hair and a baby face, and must have had a rather feminine look about me. My short, hairy buddy, Darrell, and I both dressed up as girls for a Halloween party hosted by the nursing faculty at the University of Calgary. He looked like a gorilla in his too-tight cheerleading costume, with his five-o’clock shadow, broad shoulders and hairy legs making a perfect comic contrast to the stereotypical image of cheerleader. I, on the other hand, had curled and feathered blonde hair, and wore a black strapless dress my sister had loaned me, stuffed with realistic looking breasts complete with erect nipples. I wore the pumps my brother-in-law had worn to a Rocky Horror Picture Show party where he had dressed as “Frank N. Furter.” Laurette also did my hair and makeup, and looking at the photo now, I have to admit I looked quite feminine and attractive.

When we got to the party, everyone laughed when they saw my buddy in his borrowed cheerleader costume. I spent the night fending off advances by young men sincerely wanting to dance with me. I had some fun with it, and acted really raunchy with them when I spurned their advances. I remember grabbing one of my breasts and saying, “suck this” in as deep a voice as I could muster. I began to feel a bit uncomfortable in how successfully I had become a woman, but probably kind of enjoyed the attention (and free drinks) and seeing the look on guys’ faces when they found out I was a guy. So I drank more, which didn’t really help. There was an incident when a group of guys followed me into the bathroom and one of them yelled out, “This chick pisses like a guy!” as I stood at the urinal. We later went to a high school party on the way home, and looking back on it now, I remember that no one else was in costume besides us, which makes it an even stranger evening.

I’ve had another fun night since then while dressed as a woman, about 10 years ago, when my teacher buddy, Geoff, and I dressed as female Safeway cashiers for a college Halloween party. We had assembled very authentic costumes, complete with the vintage official white frocks, wigs, banana hair clips, Safeway lapel pins,
red elastic wrist key holders, white runners, and raunchy names on our official Safeway nametags. He was Fellatia and I was Cunnilinga. We ended up accepting a ride home with a former student and some of her friends, and at one point late in the evening I remember being chased by her disgruntled ex-boyfriend. It would have been a pretty hilarious sight from the perspective of an outsider.

_Rachel:_ I enjoyed your drag stories. I have a similar story; for an eighties party we decided to dress up my roommate, Marlaina, as our idol (you guessed it) Bruce Springsteen. Marlaina is a pretty substantial girl, so when we squeezed her into some “wiener jeans” and a “I [heart] NJ” t-shirt with ripped sleeves, she made a pretty convincing version of “The Boss.” I actually got a little nervous around her—it felt like Bruce was right there in my cruddy apartment! I’d just gotten a new haircut/dye so we felt I would make a pretty good Robert Smith, lead singer of the band, _The Cure_. I wore lots of eye make-up and pouted all night. (Nobody got it.) Anyway, we went to this eighties party at the college. It was great, we karaokeed the night away, drank a little, and had a good time as Bruce and Bob.

Then some other girls convinced us to go to this other more mainstream bar. We got there and realized there were a lot of machismo type guys and they didn’t seem to like our costumes as much as everyone at the party. A lot of the people there seemed really confused. For some reason the idea of dressing up like another gender—even just for fun, totally blew their minds. One guy actually tweaked Marlaina’s nipple! She just grabbed him by the arm and asked, “Would you pinch The Boss’s tit?!” It was pretty funny. But we left right after that—because we were getting way too many weird looks and a feeling like we weren’t welcome.

_Darren:_ I’d have liked to pick up more on some threads of your earlier piece, maybe by asking you some questions. Hope that’s okay. How did your Mom show her open-mindedness to your curiosity? Were there specific instances you can remember where she stuck up for you, or supported you?

_Rachel:_ I can’t think of any specific incident. It was more just an attitude of open-mindedness. She’s always been a person who was very fascinated by other cultures and that sort of thing. She used to make me go to these multicultural days at Bower Ponds in Red Deer where we’d get to eat food from another culture, make some craft, that kind of thing.

I think she was very lonely when she moved from Germany and she always talked about how unwelcoming and homogenized the culture in Red Deer was, which she detested. Maybe that’s when it became really important to her that we would grow up to be accepting of people who were different.

_Darren:_ I noticed you said “make me go” and “have to eat.” Is that wording significant? Did you feel like you were forced to be accepting? What did you think at the time?
Rachel: At the time I thought it was kind of lame and boring. Looking back on it—it was kind of a forced experience and very surface level—but maybe if you’re not living in a very diverse place those experiences have to be somewhat forced. I don’t think I was being forced to be accepting, though. I was just kind if coerced into spending my Saturdays doing something structured and kind of boring when I probably would have preferred to be running around with friends or something, that’s all.

Darren: I ask because I’m always dragging along [my two children] to cultural events or human rights things, and wonder if they’ll reject it all someday.

Rachel: I don’t think so, not if it’s something that they really believe in themselves. I think kids only rebel against things that they don’t feel are right for them. Your children seem pretty open-minded by nature.

Darren: I’m so proud that [my 13-year-old son] seems so cool about diversity issues, and doesn’t have any hostilities or hang-ups about gay or transgendered people, despite his being in the throes of puberty right now. He’s got the cracking voice, occasional zits, and growth spurts (he’s already five feet nine!) but seems very secure in his identity and in the “live and let live” approach to others. He recently had to do a project for social studies and was asked to highlight an influential antiracist activist, and actually chose to create a poster on my work with young people. Kind of embarrassing, but I felt proud of him (and he got a good mark on it).

Rachel: It’s really cool that he’s proud of his Dad. Aren’t most kids that age embarrassed by their parents?

Darren: No kidding. So what did you and your friend, Janeen, do to nurture your fascination with drag/queen-gay culture?

Rachel: We watched gay movies like Rocky Horror Picture Show and The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. This is goofy: we actually created two imaginary friends who were gay (Matt and Bobby) and then we told all of our school friends about them, just to get a reaction.

Darren: This is hilarious! I love it. What else can you tell me about this? How long did it last? Were you ever discovered to be faking the gay friends?

Rachel: I think it lasted up until high school when we started to meet actual gay people and so there was no longer a need to make them up. No one ever found us out. I don’t think anyone paid attention to us actually. It was more just a game we played with each other. Looking back on it, it is pretty funny. One thing I love about Janeen is that she’s always been able to imagine a more interesting life than the one she has. I at least try to do the same.

Darren: I’ve also talked publicly about young people’s sense of social justice
and fairness, when I talk about the importance of engaging young people in anti-discrimination groups. What do you think happens to some idealistic young people as they get older?

_Rachel:_ I think for some reason, maybe through the school system or other institutions, as kids get older they lose their imagination. I think imagination is key to acceptance because it allows us to empathize with other people or imagine what it’s like to be in their position. Kids seem to do that naturally. Secondly, I think as our brains become more developed maybe it becomes easier to rationalize behavior that is wrong or unfair.

_Darren:_ When you say, “As our brains become more developed” might you mean, “As we get socialized into a society that marginalizes certain groups of people”?

_Rachel:_ Well I guess what I was getting at was the tendency for people, as they grow older, to rationalize all sorts of thoughts behavior which I thought might have to do with Western dependence on the rational or logical. So I suppose socialization is part of that, but what I was getting at more was: Why does society marginalize those groups in the first place? I mean, it has to start with the individual’s thought patterns right?

_Darren:_ Good point. Why do you think so many people are hung up on discriminating against gay people specifically, often seeking to allow them even fewer rights than other marginalized groups?

_Rachel:_ I think it has to do with society’s ideas about sex and morality—and they’re both grey areas—and areas that people might choose not think about if they don’t have to. Maybe because they’re afraid of discovering that they are an immoral or perverted person! That’s a tough question.

_Darren:_ I think you’re onto something important here. We have no trouble seeing heterosexual couples kissing and talking about having kids, making their relationship hotter, etc., but when it’s applied to gays, suddenly it’s too sexual, too intimate, too gross and sick. Something about their love makes it taboo or a flashpoint for people in our society. And didn’t you think of yourself as a lesbian at one point? Where are you in your identity formation on the issue of orientation, if you don’t mind my asking?

_Rachel:_ In high school I began to identify myself as bisexual, after having romantic relationships with women. People seemed to think I was a lesbian because I was so heavily involved with the GSA and because I never went out with guys. I was also very interested in feminism at the time—reading feminist books and magazines in all of my spare time—and through that I became aware of gender roles and stereotypes which I found fun to play around with (which might be another reason people thought I was a lesbian). In any case, I didn’t like to deny it because
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I felt really strongly that it shouldn’t be an issue. Right now I still consider myself bisexual but I’m not very involved in the “queer scene.” I’m in a more liberal environment so essentially it doesn’t come up very often and it’s generally become less of an issue in my life.

I think that period of questioning that I went through was very important to my growth as an individual. For one, I did a lot of reading about sexuality and gender so now I don’t feel I have to struggle with societal pressures as much as someone who never thought or learned about those things. I feel I am better equipped to resist the pressure a lot of women feel to be the perfect image of femininity, but at the same time I don’t feel like I need to make myself into a kind of walking billboard or statement resisting that. Does that make sense? I feel more aware of the dichotomy that exists and that, like most people, I fall somewhere in the middle of masculine/feminine or gay/straight. I hope that makes sense.

Darren: It makes lots of sense. Thanks for your candor and openness in this conversation. I’ve really found our reflections enlightening, and each time you’ve brought up a specific topic or issue it has triggered something for me. I know we didn’t undertake this exercise to answer a set of specific questions, but to explore and open up some deeper understanding through a mutual inquiry in to this cluster of ideas. And I hope we’ve done that.

Rachel: Is that it for self-exploration? It’s been kind of fun. I mean, it’s not often you find someone interested in listening to you reflect on your high school experiences to that extent. Anyway, I’ve got to get some work done. May your days off be long and your legal battles short.

Notes

1 We initiated our writing of this article as an email conversation between friends over the course of three months in the spring of 2005. Darren is the former teacher/coordinator of a high school student activist group, Students and Teachers Opposing Prejudice (STOP), of which Rachel was an active member. Both stroved to be conscious of the interplay between their own identities with respect to age, gender, orientation, and social position. The authors have included the text of their email conversations almost verbatim, with minor revisions for clarity and correctness, and the inclusion of references.

2 Red Deer is a small city in Alberta, Canada, located at the mid-point between the two largest cities in the province, Calgary and Edmonton. Red Deer’s population is approximately 75,000 people. The surrounding region, known as Central Alberta, has suffered from a negative national reputation based on past extremist activities of the Aryan Nation racist organization, and the high-profile trials and appeals of James Keegstra, a former teacher and convicted hate promoter.

3 Folkporn.com (2005) was a satirical website designed by Rachel and her friends to offer a tongue-in-cheek critique of misogynist pornographic websites while promoting healthy self-image among women.

4 A pseudonym is used here for his protection.
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Taboo began as a publication of Peter Lang Publishing, with two issues published each year in 1995, 1996, and 1997. Taboo has since been acquired by Caddo Gap Press, which renewed publication of the journal with the Spring-Summer 2000 issue.

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Reconstructing Neo-Confucianism, Linguistics, and Third Space with Curriculum Studies: A Critical Discussion of Hongyu Wang’s *The Call from the Stranger on a Journey Home: Curriculum in a Third Space*


This article evaluates Hongyu Wang’s work from the basis of critical cultural studies. The pros and cons are analyzed in the article. Wang’s work contributes to making a neat research about one of the important themes in cultural studies—identity politics. Her work also shows the case of relating theories and practices. Wang wisely employs her personal experiences to help readers to understand an always-in-the-making self through an interdisciplinary approach which crosses the boundaries of philosophy, psychology, gender studies, and curriculum studies. She uses the metaphor of journey to cross boundaries of eastern and western values and to explore the identity issue and to establish an idealistic space—the third space—as a solution to struggling with identity politics. She uses poetic language to explain her ideas to the reader.

I offer a general feedback about Wang’s work. Wang uses the first chapter to bring to light the main issue of the book—identity. She is skilled at using metaphor to explain her ideas. She uses images of mother and self to represent Chinese culture and American culture. Then, in chapters 2 and 3, she uses Foucault’s and Confucius’ work to analyze identity issue from the standpoint of philosophy. She points out that Foucault’s work focuses more on the western individuality and the self as suppressing the other. Confucius’ description of identity issue emphasizes more the eastern relational self as combining self and other. Wang sets up the platform to bring about the issue of the third space through discussing the western
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and eastern values about the self issue. In chapter 4, she uses Julia Kristiva’s work to analyze the identity issue from the feminist and psychological perspectives. She criticizes the hegemony of patriarchy by talking about the dichotomy of semiotic and symbolic. In chapter 5, she makes a case for bringing many factors together, including the philosophical self, psychic transformation, crossing cultural and gender lines; in order to deeply and vividly showing the image of the third space. Later, in chapter 6, as the beginning of the book, she uses her personal experiences again, completing the circle and relating her concept of the third space into curriculum studies.

However, I will discuss several issues that arise in The Call from the Stranger on a Journey Home: Curriculum in a Third Space—Neo-Confucianism, the need for language studies, and the definition of the third space. I first discuss the perspective of Neo-Confucianism. In chapter 3, Wang says that

...the development of Confucianism into Neo-Confucianism in the context of the institutionalization of Confucianism and how the evolution suppressed the transformative potential of Confucian personal cultivation in its communal and cosmic relatedness. (p. 55)

Wang makes a comparison about the classic Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism. She recommends the traditional classic Confucianism and claims that it successfully explains the definition of self-cultivation. But she claims that Neo-Confucianism prevents the individual freedom and self-transformation involving with the gender issue and the hierarchy in society. Classic Confucianism addresses the perspective on the connection between education and society by discussing what Confucius saw as the relationship between the individual and society. Confucians claim that people are the foundation of society, and education is the means by which it can be transformed into a harmonious society. I guess that Wang thinks Neo-Confucianism suppressing self-transformation because it is not educating the people into the harmony but not educating people into the conformity. Wang claims that women’s inequality and strict hierarchy system are more addressed specifically in the Neo-Confucianism. She criticizes Zhu Xi, the representative of Neo-Confucianism, who equaled “human desires” with “selfish desires” and “materialistic desire” and also thought that human desires were against “clean human nature” (p. 67). I think that her views ignore the positive influence of Neo-Confucianism. I think that human nature is spiritual and born; human desire is materialistic and developed in the real life practices. As one of given ethical principles, Neo-Confucianism emphasizes on “Li” [the rituals and ceremonies] in the hierarchy society. I think that right attitude is developed in the everyday spiritual practicing and historical contexts. Then the people are trained to develop creative response to the common good rather than private interests all the time. Through this way, the self-transformation of the people is aroused but not suppressed.

Second, I think that Wang needs to explore more about the language studies issue in chapter 4. Wang uses Julia Kristina’s work to discuss the dichotomy of
gender issue by relating language studies. She uses Chinese language as the example to show readers the separation of semiotic/maternal and the symbolic/paternal (p. 88). In Wang's definition of “the third space” it is an open space of crossing western and eastern culture values. I suggest that English and French should be discussed to broaden readers' understanding of gender issue in the scope of linguistics. For example, there is critique about gender biases of vocabularies in English by the feminist scholars. Many everyday English vocabularies like “salesman, postman, fireman…” seem not to provide the equal space for the vocational possibility for the female. To make her views of points more convincing, Wang is suggested to make an analysis of English and French.

Third, I want to talk more about the term “the third space.” Related to the key theme of the book, I suggest more elucidation and interpretation of Homi Bhabha’s views in Wang’s work to help readers with the definition of the third space. Bhabha uses the term to explain the definition of multiculturalism politics but he does not mention the case of gender differentiation. Bhabha also elucidates the idea of third space is not only one open and dynamic system but also one crossing historical boundary. Bhabha defines:

The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. (Bhabha, 1990, p. 37)

Wang walks further and extends his ideas by relating to gender issue. But she does not talk enough about the historical journey factor. She also does not make readers quite understand where sources ideas of “the third space” come from by lightly mentioning Homi Bhabha’s views.

Fourth, I want to discuss the value of the book. Wang convinces readers of the necessity to read her book by starting with her autobiography. She uses her autobiography to be the clue of crossing the eastern/western values and relating her female identity to discuss the self/other issue, and also show the case of relating curriculum theories to practices. But I suggest that more original creative ideas are discussed in the book. Wang’s work seems to be more close to a synthesis of interpretation of other people’s works. More applications of explaining the term of “the third space” are needed. From the general organization, I argue that there are too much theoretic writings but a lack of “how to” in curriculum studies praxis.

In conclusion, Wang’s contributions are significant in presenting the term “the third space” in curriculum studies for a multifaceted consideration including culture, gender, and geographical locals. However, I suggest that chorological factors should be included in the book for helping readers understand the key theme. More real-case application, instructions, and advice are also needed in the book.
Acknowledgement

I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Miriam Levering, a professor in the Religion Studies Department at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. I took a cognate course advised by her and this essay is part of my coursework. I sincerely thank her for her kind instruction and time.

References


Jumping on the Trampoline: A Balancing Act between Work and Family Child Care

Grace Hui-Chen Huang

Introduction

Increasing numbers of women with young children have entered the work force during the last several decades. Especially within the last two decades, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of women with young children entering the work force. In the United States, more than sixty percent of married women with children under the age of six work (Gornick & Meyers, 2001; Phillips & Adams, 2001; Janning, 2006). About 14.5 million children under the age of five years regularly attend child care in the U.S. (Smith, 2000).

One consequence of this change in employment patterns is that many married women and men have taken on substantial work and family obligations. Such obligations used to be much simpler. Fathers went out to work while mothers stayed home and took care of the family. Both parents are now going out to work. Striking a balance between work and family has become a daily feat for many families with children. The growing number of mothers entering the workforce has changed the fabric of the family; women no longer stay home to care for their children. This has caused an increase in the need for parents to find someone else to care for their children as well as to find a balance between employment and family responsibilities.

Smith (2000) found that about 14.5 million children under the age of five years (75%) regularly attend child care in the United States. There are various types of child care; family child care is one of the most widely used forms of child care in the United States. Family child care is defined as care to non-related children by a caregiver in her or his own home (Kontos, 1992). Sending a child to an acceptable quality family child care is a primary concern for parents.

Much has been written about the balancing act between work and family (Bartley, Blanton, & Gilliard, 2005; Coltrane, 2000; Coplan, Bowker, & Cooper, 2003; Janning, 2006; Powers, 2004; Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005). However,
much less attention has been given to parents’ experiences juggling work, family, and child care, even though most working parents need to use child care. The aim of this research is to contribute to the understanding of parents’ balancing act between work, family, and child care through their experiences.

Methodology and Methods

Phenomenology was the methodology adopted in this study. Phenomenology seeks an understanding of the ways people subjectively experience their world and what it means for the experience (Van Manen, 1990). It is the study of everyday experiences and the meanings we construct from them. As to the method, interviews were used to explore participants’ experiences. The intention was to understand parents’ perceptions and perspectives from an insider’s perspective. In this sense, parents are the ones who lead the research process. They play active roles in helping the researcher understand their experiences, rather than passively responding to questions.

Thirteen Caucasian parents, eight mothers and five fathers living in a large midwestern city in the U.S. were interviewed. The ages of their children ranged from 4-week-old to 6-year-old. All parents interviewed worked part-time or full-time in an array of positions ranging from blue collar to professional. The educational level of the participants ranged from high school to graduate degrees. Twelve parents used family child care for more than three years.

Parents were interviewed individually. Ten participants were interviewed twice while three participants were interviewed once. Twenty-three interviews were completed. The interview structure was open-ended, allowing participants to talk in depth about their experiences. The interview process was guided by the central research question: “As a working parent, what is it like sending your child to family day care?” The researcher asked a series of probing or clarifying questions based on the participants’ responses. The researcher also asked for examples to generate thicker narrative description and inquired whether the participants had additional information to share about the particular experience or situation.

The data analysis began simultaneously with the data collection, which enabled the researcher to focus and shape the study as it proceeded (Glesne, 2006). The researcher created an organizational framework by sorting and coding collected data and identifying the primary patterns and possible relationships in the data. After carefully examining related texts grouped around the patterns, the researcher noticed a common thread across the patterns, namely, a juggling act. Accordingly, the initial codes were reorganized under this more generic code of a juggling act. Through this process, the themes emerged (Patton, 2002). As the themes unfolded from the participants’ narratives, the researcher simplified the narratives into a thematic description that characterized the experiences of the participants (Van Manen, 1990).
Findings

In this study, parents provided insights about their juggling experiences between work and family obligations on a daily basis. Themes that emerged from the analysis were the race against the clock, when children are sick, should I work, and balancing dual roles.

The Race Against the Clock

The juggling act begins as soon as parents wake up in the morning. After getting themselves and their children ready for the day, they then had to rush to day care, drop off their children and then rush to work.

We all had to get up early, get Tom up, and get ready for work. We had to get breakfast, get Tom dressed, and get him breakfast. Tom was potty training. We had to get him to sit on the potty chair in the morning. And we tried to be organized and get things ready the night before... It was kind of a zoo. We were stumbling over each other. Nothing was coordinated. It was hectic in the morning. It was a circus. We felt like we were a bunch of clowns in the middle of three-ring circus.

Not only were mornings difficult for parents, but the end of the work day proved to also be a struggle. Parents raced against time to complete their work before leaving to pick their children up from day care. They often rushed to finish their work, and then rushed to pick their children up from child care. It was a constant battle trying to beat the clock.

Sometimes I would have to stay with the customers....The customers would go get some supper, and I would run up and get Lauren at the day care home, get her set, and then we had to run back to the shop. It was tough. (Mr. Dunn)

When parents did finally complete their work and were able to go home with their children, there still was no relief. It was like having a second job at night. A father said,

It was more of a struggle when I got home at night… I would rush to pick up my kids at day care. Then, I would come home and have supper. And then I knew there were bills that I needed to pay… I needed to snow blow the driveway, get the garbage out, because the garbage truck comes the next day. I would work until 11 o’clock at night. And then you got up at 6:00 o’clock again and started all over. So after work, I finished my day job. And then I picked Lauren up, it was almost like it was still another job to finish up, you know. You went home, and that was your second job.

When Children Are Sick

Parents often did not have a back-up child care plan for times when their chil-
dren were sick. It was difficult trying to find someone to care for their sick children at the last minute. They had to take time off from work to care for their sick children sometimes. Two mothers described their experiences.

When my daughter is sick, it is a struggle. I don’t have back-up care for her. Here I am, calling everyone I know in town to see if they can take care of her. Sometimes, I ended up leaving work early because I couldn’t find anyone available. It was very stressful. I didn’t want to give my boss the impression that I was often absent because my daughter was frequently sick. Some people would think that you are not a hard worker because you are absent a lot.

Every week, you are hoping that they won’t get sick this week, because illness is so frequent in the winter months. I am almost like by Thursday if I can make it through and nobody has gotten sick, I am so happy, you know.

Should I Work?

Mothers expressed their frustration and doubts about their trying to do everything, devoting more time and attention to work and to family. Essentially, parents were spreading themselves thin by trying to keep up with both. Consequently, they were not particularly satisfied with either their work results or family efforts.

I was trying to balance work and family sorts of things. But it wasn’t working. It just gets to be too much for me. Then I feel like I am not doing just either one. I am only half there at work, and only half there at home. At work, I would be limited. I couldn’t go to work early, but I have a lot to get done. And I could only work so late, because I had to pick up Lauren. I am so tired of it, Grace. I am tired of balancing work and family things, because it’s just too, too much.

These mothers experienced role overload as they filling multiple roles in their life. Additionally, parents did not feel the sense of completeness at work and home. Mothers’ about their decision to work and place their children in family child care were enhanced when economic factors were taken into consideration.

I worked 5 or 6 hours a day. And what I actually brought home zeroed out. I paid for child care. Cause you paid for the whole day, you know.

For some parents, especially mothers who worked only part-time, or perhaps earned lower salaries, the cost of day care often equaled or surpassed what they were earning at work. Economically, it was hard to make justification to continue working and paying for child care.

After all the efforts trying to balance everything, mothers questioned whether they would possibly have the chance to feel successful.

We are limited both at work and at home. Not only that, society is harsh on women. If we do well at work and not too well at home, we are criticized as being bad mothers and bad wives, sacrificing our family for personal career. If the same thing happened with men, they were admired for their success in careers.
If we do well at home, people would say that is what we are supposed to do. No matter how hard we try, we don’t seem to be credited as well as men are. We are going nowhere.

Achieving success in one area might mean letting go of the other. These working mothers experienced that their roles as mothers and female workers were not valued in this society.

**Balancing Dual Roles: Work and Family**

This theme describes how mothers and fathers managed their dual roles. The sub-themes that emerged were *thinking of the children while at work* and *involvement in child care for mothers and fathers.*

*Thinking of the children while at work.* Mothers often found themselves thinking of their children while at work. For fathers, the experience of leaving their children in child care was different.

Once mothers dropped off their children at day care and went to work, they would wonder and think about the kind and quality of care their children were receiving at child care. While picking their children up, mothers found themselves thinking about what needed to be done at work. They were constantly thinking about one while doing the other.

I thought about them while I worked, you know. What are they doing? How are they doing? Are they watching a movie? Are they talking to July (provider)? If it was the day my husband went to pick the kids up, I would wonder: Will Willy (husband) get there on time? Will he remember to bring back their belongings from child care?

As for fathers, they expressed a higher comfort level about the separation between work and child care, leaving their children at day care and focusing their attention on their work.

To me, it’s more like: Tom is taken care of in child care. I don’t have to worry about it. If something serious happens, Susan (provider) knows how to get ahold of us right away. I was paying a service to have Tom being taken care of. Let’s go in, drop him off; pick him up. Then you move on, focusing on your job next. It’s more of a man’s mentality, I think (laugh).

*Involvement in child care for mothers and fathers: roles are clear, responsibilities are different.* Mothers tended to play a major role. Fathers, in contrast, often played more of a supporting role.

I was the primary doer. My husband was the back seat. He was just letting me do it. I think he was just waiting for me to do most of the work because he just knew I would. He was like a supporter of me. Supporter, yeah, (laugh) saying, “Go, Daniela, go!” He is standing on the sideline as a cheerleader, very positive, but not proactive. Yeah, maybe that’s the word.
These parents have alluded to the differences in the roles each played in child care. Mothers were the primary decision-makers and usually the ones to take action while fathers provided suggestions and helped make decisions.

These parents identified some factors that contributed to the different levels of involvement in child care between mothers and fathers. Fathers devoted much of their time to work and tended to be the primary breadwinners of the family. Some mothers, in contrast, worked fewer hours than fathers did. As a result, they were perceived as having more time to manage child care. Among the participants, only one mother worked more hours than her husband did. During the interview, the association between involvement and working hours was not brought up by either of them.

Parents also perceived that money had an influence on the justification of role differentiation in the household—the more one earns the less responsibility one has in child care.

I am really not making much money. I am not really contributing to the household bills. And he considers himself working to pay the bills, so that leaves kind of the child care situation up to me.

Additionally, capability was another factor. To parents’ perceptions, mothers tended to be more experienced, knowledgeable, sensitive, and responsive. Some parents also suggested that societal expectations provide another factor. They indicated that role differentiations are learned behaviors.

When I was in high school, the girls would be the ones to go to cooking class, and child development class. The boys would go to shop. So we shouldn’t be surprised really that men from my generation anyway didn’t exactly know how to deal with all these things... This was part of how we were all raised in this culture.

**Jumping on the Trampoline: A Balancing Act**

The parents in this study indicated that they had to constantly balance work, family, and child care. The experience is much like jumping on a trampoline. It was difficult for these parents to maintain steady footing, and they often found themselves struggling to achieve balance. With each successive jump, adjustments had to be made in order to maintain one’s balance. In terms of work and family, a successful landing in one area may mean falling in the other. On a trampoline, it is always possible to jump different ways. One may jump higher, faster than the other, or even be in a different jumping position. The different roles mothers and fathers play in managing child care is an especially relevant example to illustrate how parents may jump in different positions on a trampoline.
Discussion

Contradictory Public Perceptions of Mothers and Child Care

In this study, mothers experienced inner conflict, doubt, and societal pressure. They found themselves doubting their decision to place their children in day care while they worked. Their experiences reflected the contradictory feelings Americans have regarding day care, motherhood, and women in the workforce.

The general definition of a good mother as a full-time caregiver at home remains powerful. The concepts that child care is not as good as mother care for children, and that mothers who rely on day care are neglectful continue (Cowan & Cowan, 1998). These ideas and expectations invoke the guilt and anxiety of most working mothers who send their children to child care. With the falling of the economy, many women have to work to support their families. For those women who rely on public assistance to feed their children who are being told to go out and get a job and better themselves, child care is a necessity. Therefore, in the larger society, the contradiction between public expectations about mothers’ roles in child care and economic realities for women to work is all across the social economic spectrum.

Role Overload

Working is not by itself a major factor to the quality of parenting and home life for working parents. What seems to be critical is the balance between work and family (Leinonen, Solantaus, & Punamaki, 2002). Findings in this research show that balancing multiple roles was overwhelming to parents. These parents experienced role overload. They also experienced the conflict between work and family. Research indicated that role overload and conflict place people at greater risk for both physical and mental health problems, such as depression, negative mood, substance dependence disorders, and job/life dissatisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton, 2000). Additionally, parents’ feelings of stress, in turn, may be brought home to affect parent-child relationships and children’s behavior and development (Galambos, Sears, Almeida, & Kolaric, 1995; Leinonen, Solantaus, & Punamaki, 2003). Therefore, the issue of parents’ role overload is an area that needs further understanding and development of appropriate strategies to help parents manage their balancing act.

Coping Strategies

Social support for working parents may ease their experiences of role overload (Leinonen, Solantaus, & Punamaki, 2003). Three layers of support adapted from Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory for working families would provide a comprehensive system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Microsystem: support from the workplace. Microsystem refers to the immediate setting with others which has a direct impact on the person, such as the workplace for working parents. Businesses today are much more sensitive to female work-
Jumping on the Trampoline

ers’ needs and still less sensitive to men’s needs of balancing work and family. To encourage fathers’ roles in child care and home, it is critical for employers to provide support, such as offering more flexible and accommodating family policies. Employers who recognize workers’ needs tend to facilitate workers’ feelings of satisfaction, security, and their support for their company. There is a correlation between employer’s recognition and the likelihood that employees will stay with their employer and promote its products and services which outrank compensation and benefits (Powers, 2004). It is a win-win situation.

Exosystem: support from family child care provider. Exosystem refers to the setting in which parents do not actually participate, but the setting affects them in one of their Microsystems, such as family child care for working parents. Parents expressed a need for flexibility from providers, such as accommodating parents’ specific needs in the child care schedule. For example, when parents were late to pick up their children due to unexpected situations at work, would the provider understand and accommodate the special circumstances?

Macrosystem: Support from public policy. Macrosystem refers to the society and subculture to which parents belong, such as social policy and belief system. Much of the policy debate about child care today has been framed by a fundamental belief in “parent’s choice,” meaning that parents should have the ability to choose the type of care. In reality, many parents’ child care “choices” reflect a mix of priorities and constraints. Economic factors can be one of the constraints. Women in secretarial positions or other predominantly female positions do not make much money. Financially, it is hard justifying working and paying for child care. Most policies that affect parents’ child care options are designed to facilitate employment and do little to help parents simultaneously ensure the quality and cost of child care. Parental economic independence, rather than child care, is the goal of most child care policies (Phillips & Adams, 2001).

One way to support working families is with child care subsidies which would reduce child care costs and relieve families’ economic burden. Based on several studies, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds who receive child care subsidies were more likely to be in higher quality care (Brooks, 2002; Gornick & Meyers, 2001). Congress and state legislatures have been slow to expand subsidies to keep up with demand. The lack of federal and state dollars to pay for child care subsidies affects the quality of child care arrangements (Stone & Daugherty, 2000).

Discrepancy in Parents’ Contributions in Child Care: Roles Are Clear, Responsibilities Are Different

As many mothers enter the workforce, subsequently reducing their time at home, the amount of housework performed by mothers has declined only slightly. They are still primarily responsible for the home. Men’s contributions to family work have risen but not in any major way (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999; Lei-
Men spent less than 50 percent of the time their wives spent on child care, an increase of only 15 percentage since 1965 (Gornick & Meyers, 2001). Why does the huge gap exist? There are many factors as argued in the literature and by the parents in this study.

**Involvement as a socializing process.** Maccoby (1998) states that men and women’s roles are socially constructed and the differentiation is a product of socialization. Roles emerge through learning processes whereby each generation of adults passes them along to the upcoming generation. It is a social shaping process. With regard to child care, men and women are brought up learning that child care belongs to women’s work.

**Economic pressure.** In this society, men’s average salary is higher than women’s in the labor force. In dual-parent families with children below school age, mothers’ income accounts for, at most, a third of families’ total labor-market income (Gornick & Meyers, 2001). Most men take the primary responsibility to be the breadwinner of the household. They provide more economic supports which may press toward less involvement of fathers and greater involvement of mothers in child care activities. The less involvement in child care increases more time for fathers at work.

### Conclusion

Although this research has revealed insights about parents’ balancing act between work, family, and child care, there are limitations to be noted. The participants in this study were a relatively small number; therefore, generalization was not the goal of this study with regard to the larger population of working parents’ experiences. However, the themes that emerged from this research are still applicable to work, family, and child care experiences for many families. Additionally, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that parents’ experiences are embedded in the larger society that perpetuates ethnicity. With this in mind, all participants in this study were Caucasians. Thus, the findings may not be generalized to more diverse families. The task before us, therefore, is to specify in more detail how parents’ experiences in diverse families are implicated in various cultures.

Despite these limitations, this article provides an angle for better understanding of parents’ work, family, and child care demands. The findings suggest that parents shoulder tremendous hardships juggling work and family responsibilities, including the challenges of time, dealing with illness, inner struggles, and dual roles. Achieving balance is such a difficult task. More and more families find themselves squeezed for time between the demands of the workplace and the home. Further research of parents’ coping strategies related to role overload through study of a larger population sample would benefit both parents and helping professionals. Additionally, further qualitative study is also needed to understand the detailed qualities of such strategies.
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Our findings add to the body of research on work, family, and child care. More studies of those areas will help us gain a better perspective of the phenomenon surrounding parents’ experiences and a more holistic frame within which to work for the benefit of children, families, and society as a whole. It will certainly require a thoughtful collective effort from child care providers, employers, and policy makers to provide strong support for working families and a shift from rhetoric to action in the valuing of children and families in the United States.

Acknowledgement

The author gratefully acknowledges the expertise and invaluable feedback of Dinah Volk on an earlier version of this article.

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A Critical Complex Epistemology of Practice

Joe L. Kincheloe

In the 1980s questions began to emerge in a variety of fields about how one learns to engage in the practice of a profession. Profound questions were raised about the role of professional knowledge and how it is used in the process of educating practitioners in a variety of domains. Teacher educators have learned from researchers studying situated cognition and reflective practice that practitioner ways of knowing are unique, quite different from the technical ways of knowing traditionally associated with professional expertise. Indeed, professional expertise is an uncertain enterprise as it confronts constantly changing, unique, and unstable conditions in social situations, cultural interchange, sci-tech contexts, and, of course, in classrooms.

The expert practitioners studied by socio-cognitivists and scholars of reflective practice relinquished the certainty that attends to professional expertise conceived as the repetitive administration of techniques to similar types of problems. Advocates of rigorous complex modes of professional practice insist that practitioners can develop high-order forms of cognition and action, in the process becoming researchers of practice who explore the intricacies of educational purpose and its relation to everyday life in the classroom. This paper explores what exactly such higher-order forms of cognition and action might look like in relation to the process of learning to teach.

Two cultures: Researchers and Practitioners—the Complex Relationship between Research and Practice

Grounded on the assumption that traditional scientific notions of the relationship between knowledge produced about education and practice, the paper calls for more research on the complex nature of this relationship. At present a culture gap often exists between practitioners and many researchers. Many teachers have come to believe that educational researchers have little to say that would be helpful to their everyday lives. In this context research and practice are separate entities—educa-
tional researchers are captives of their epistemologies and their professional culture’s own agenda. They are captives in the sense that they have tended to ask only those questions answerable by the empirical methods of physical science. One discipline or paradigm is not adequate to the task of understanding the network of the intricate and ambiguous human relationships making up a classroom or a school. Researchers need a multi-dimensional set of research strategies to help understand such school/classroom interactions and their relationship to deep social, cultural, and economic structures. In the technical rationality of much educational research, the attempt to translate such intricate relationships into pedagogical knowledge often renders the data gathered meaningless in the eyes of practitioners. Until researchers gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between knowledge and practice—the epistemology of practice—the gulf between researchers and practitioners will remain.

Many educational research studies depend on observations within strictly controlled teaching situations that have little to do with everyday classrooms. What teachers perceive as the irrelevance of such research often relates to what Lee Shulman labeled “task validity,” that is, the degree to which the environment in a laboratory is analogous to the complex environment of the classroom. Informed by the practical knowledge, many teachers have intuitively questioned the generalizability of laboratory research findings to the natural setting of the classroom. Teachers have suspected the inapplicability, but too often the social science, psychological, and educational research establishment was not so insightful. The “normal science” of the dominant paradigm assumed that laboratory research findings were the source of solution applicable in every classroom setting. Such a technical science has failed to understand that every classroom possesses a culture of its own with particular problems and solutions to such problems.

A more complex educational science accounts for knowledge of what has happened previously in a classroom—how classroom meanings, codes, and conventions have been negotiated. An educational researcher simply cannot walk into a classroom without an understanding of the previously negotiated meanings and expect it to make sense. Indeed, it is even more unrealistic for the researcher to expect that generalizations applicable to other classrooms can be made from this incomplete and often misleading snapshot of a classroom. To understand the complexity of the classroom, more multidimensional, multiperspectival methods must be employed.

A more complex understanding of both the research process in general and research methodology in particular helps educational researchers appreciate that the space between teaching and the outcomes of learning is shaped by a cornucopia of variables. Because of this complexity, the attempt to explain divergence in student performance by reference to a few generalizable dimensions of teacher action is reductionistic and misleading. Central to this paper is the need for recognition of the complex and multidimensional relationship between research and practice. Our goal is not simply to research education but to explore new and more rigorous ways of engaging in such inquiry, to develop modes of research
that lead to the development of practical forms of knowledge with a profound use value for educators.

Educating Reflective, Scholarly Practitioners
Who Consume and Produce Educational Research

Teaching prospective teachers how to teach may be one of the most difficult pedagogical tasks a university assumes. Too often, however, it is assumed to be a mere technical act with little connection to philosophical purposes, politics, social and cultural questions or epistemological perceptions of what constitutes knowledge. Many of teaching methods courses and textbooks that are based on traditional forms of empirical research reduce teaching to step-by-step recipes removed from any consideration of pedagogical purpose that transcends the mechanical transfer of data from teacher to student. Our theme of complexity emerges once again, as we consider that all performative activities from being a standup comic to teaching an algebra class are consistently interrupted by unexpected circumstances. In such a surprising situation initiates a form of reflection-in-action (Schon, 1995) that helps the entertainer or the teacher reconsider her understanding of the circumstance and the strategies she has been employing to accomplish particular goals. In many situations reflection in light of such surprises may lead to a reconceptualization of the goals themselves.

A scholarly, rigorously educated, reflective practitioner possesses the ability to restructure her conceptual framing of a situation—not only at the micro-level as it involves rethinking a technique but also at the meso- and macro-level as it involves school policy or socio-cultural understanding. In these contexts the practitioner has developed a professional expertise that allows her to improvise a new course of action that can be tested and interpreted on the spot. A teacher may employ such a form of professional cognition when she encounters a student whose learning style does not fit particular textbook archetypes. The teacher’s ability to diagnose a learning problem resulting in such a circumstance involves a wide variety of social, cultural, psychological, cognitive, and pedagogical insights as well as the ability to conduct research in the immediacy of the classroom experience. Such reflection-in-action involves these activities and the questioning of the efficacy of particular assumptions, strategies, or beliefs involving one’s own educational work.

Thus, the knowledges of professional education and educators are of a different variety than the propositional knowledge of science. Such propositional knowledge—e.g., more time on task improves test scores—is not especially helpful to teachers who have to deal with the ever-changing dynamics of everyday life in schools. When researchers assume that teachers simply apply this propositional knowledge to their technologies of teaching, they make an epistemological mistake. Such application assumes an unproblematic relationship between research and practice. A complex understanding of educational research appreciates the multidimensional interaction between knowledge of education and educational practice. Educational
research as it is conceptualized here is not produced for practitioner application but for the more interactive and complex purpose of cultivating educational insight. A complex articulation of educational research informs practitioners, it does not direct them. Indeed, it respects the interpretive ability of teachers and educational leaders to discern what, if anything, such research helps them understand about the context(s) in which they operate.

The assumption on which a more complex form of teacher education research rests is that teachers are reflective, scholarly professionals not technicians who merely follow the directives of superiors. More reductionistic modes of educational research support a classroom-based model of teacher education that inculcates teacher education students with empirical knowledge about teaching, subsequently placing them in field experiences where they implement such findings. The relationship between such knowledges and educational practice are often insufficiently discussed. Indeed, analysis of the types of educational knowledges studied and the diverse types of knowledges that exist in the universe of educational research are typically ignored.

In the reductionistic model there is no need for “mere practitioners” to waste their time with such questions. Moreover, the reductionistic model assumes that the empirical research produced by experts is of a universal variety—that it is true and applicable in all times and all places. A more complex view maintains that knowledge derived from such research must always be viewed in light of the unique circumstances of particular cases. Thus, teachers must view such knowledge within the social, cultural, economic, linguistic, and philosophical contexts of their own experiences. Thus, the complex view of research, practice, and their relationship transcends an epistemological model that promotes an evidence-based set of technical teaching skills for universal adoption by the teaching profession. A teacher education program based on the reductionistic model simply operates to deliver the certified technical teaching skills to students. Questions of conceptual frameworks and overall philosophies of professional education are irrelevant in the reductionistic context (Munby & Russell, 1996; Vavras & Archibald, 1998; Ferreira & Alexandre, 2000).

A central dimension of what we are exploring here involves the positioning of teachers in the larger understanding of educational research and its relation to practice. In addition to its epistemological and scientific flaws the reductionistic orientation to research and practice contributes to the deskilling of teachers. As referenced above, teachers in this model are not viewed as professional knowledge consumers and producers or expert interpreters of educational research and its relationship to the contexts in which they are operating. Teachers in the reductionistic context are depersonalized, molded into functionaries who are not trusted to use their professional judgment. In this context the sanctity of the entire democratic educational process is compromised, as teachers are induced to adhere to standardized techniques mandated from above, from external entities.

We are dedicated to a philosophy of research and practice that respects teachers and their professional prerogative to diagnose and assess their students. In this
process such teachers not only have the right but are also encouraged to develop curricular and pedagogical strategies to address specific classroom problems. Expert developed systems never function as well as rigorously educated individuals with an understanding of systemic purpose and the multiple contexts that shape the system, its stated and unstated goals, and professional practice within it. Obviously, such rigorously educated practitioners do not operate by applying an externally produced set of rules but on the insight gained from understanding the system from many angles combined with their professional experience. These insights are central to our complex epistemology of practice.

**Epistemological Mismatch: Scientific Theories and Problems of Practice**

The epistemological problems outlined above are not exclusive to teacher education but represent a long history of problems with knowledge and practice in the professions. The diverse professions bought into an epistemology of practice that assigned researchers to the task of applying systematic knowledge to the problems of practice. A form of technical rationality emerged in these higher educational contexts that viewed practice as primarily a process of adjusting the techniques of practitioners to clear and measurable system goals (Schon, 1995). Thus, educational research in such an epistemological context involves finding out what practitioner techniques will most efficiently raise test scores.

Thus, the complications of a complex enterprise such as teacher education are solved: teacher educators simply pass along the findings of research to the empty minds of passive students. The role of the teacher education researcher here involves creating a “correct” knowledge base for teaching. In our complex epistemology of practice the concept of practice itself is problematized. In this conceptual context educational researchers explore not only diverse forms of educational knowledge but also their utility (Munby & Russell, 1996; Geeland & Taylor, 2000). What is the practitioner able to do via her encounter with this particular set of understandings? What does the knowledge we are producing look like when encountered and conceptualized in diverse contexts of practice?

Contemporary forms of epistemology of practice emerging out of initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation are in many ways a recovery of epistemologies dominant in mid-twentieth century scholarship. Such modus operandi were especially common in post-World War II schools of business. Business educators of the era maintained that there existed a discrete set of managerial tasks in all organizational settings. Business researchers would produce research on the most effective way to perform such tasks and formal university educational programs would be established to train managers how to operate on the job (Whitley, 1995). Of course, what such managers encountered when they graduated from such programs is that standardized managerial skills are not very helpful in the diverse
and multidimensional situations encountered in everyday commerce. The world of business is much too complex too employ standardized strategies designed for ideal situations quite different than the messy ones encountered on a daily basis. Being a manager like being a teacher requires a synthesis of multiple knowledges, ad hoc thinking and action, and a facility for an informed improvisational ability. The universal knowledges of reductionistic science do not deal with such complexity.

Of course, one way of dealing with the relationship between research and practice has been to ignore academic knowledges about practice and focus instead on trading stories of “real-world experience” with student practitioners. Obviously, such a strategy is ill advised, but one can understand the frustrations that lead to such a professional curriculum. Such stories are important and have a place in professional education simply because much of knowledge of practice resides in the context in which professional activities take place. This situated nature of professional knowledge, this knowing-in-action is an epistemological form that helps teachers deal with the ambiguous, mercurial, value-laden, and interpersonal dimensions of practice. Indeed, the problems of such practice are not merely technical but moral, philosophical, social, political, ad infinitum in character. Knowing-in-action subverts the reductionistic epistemology of practice with its notion that theory precedes practice. In this positivist context professional education students get the theory—the correct way to teach—in classroom courses and then put it into practice in the school setting (Hoban & Erickson, 1998; Munby & Russell, 1996).

Obviously, we are profoundly concerned with the failures of the technical-rational model of teacher education. Central to this failure is the positivist model’s lack of concern with questioning the meaning of theory and concurrent devaluing of the need for analyzing the complex, multidimensional relationship between theory and practice. As noted above this concern with positivist theory and its relationship to practice should not be interpreted as a rejection of theory and a retreat to an undertheorized notion of professional practice. Understanding these dynamics we are interested in developing and studying complex forms of teacher education that don’t simply apply the knowledges produced by various disciplines but instead interpret the insights produced by various academic disciplines in relation to the purposes, ethics, political and socio-cultural dimensions, and technical problems of educational practice. This is a different task, than the one delineated in the technical-rational model (Ferreira & Alexandre, 2000).

In this context we are deeply interested in exploring the relationship between science and experience, especially, of course, as this interaction relates to the domain of learning to teach. Technical science is much more successful when it operates in domains where the bifurcation of knowledge and experience is possible—e.g., “pure research” settings. Once knowledge production is situated in a context where the separation of knowledge and experience is not possible—e.g., professional schools and professional education—numerous problems emerge. These professional settings with their unique demands of science have not been granted sufficient attention by
the academy. The problems and enigmas encountered in such contexts have many times not been deemed worthy of extensive research. Thus, the insights needed to improve the quality of professional knowledge production and professional education have been neglected. In this important domain there is a profound need for rigorous research informed by the epistemological insights delineated here.

With these concepts in mind professional educators begin to discern that rigorous educational practice transcends the simple application of scientific knowledge to the act of teaching. With this understanding in place the teacher education and the professional practice we envision involves much more than prospective teachers simply learning proscribed curriculum knowledge, replicating certified classroom management and motivation skills, and implementing practices designed to raise student test scores. Indeed, our complex vision involves studying the ways that teachers can develop the multidisciplinary-informed wisdom to understand the impact of particular social, cultural, political, economic, and ideological contexts on the functions of schools and the performances of diverse students, to appreciate the educational effects of specific forms of educational/school organization, to discern the consequences of certain cognitive theories on the nature of the teaching and learning that takes place in a school or a system, to uncover the assumptions about the role of teachers embedded in particular pedagogical strategies, and to gain the ability to imagine diverse ways of organizing educational experiences when professional diagnoses reveal problems with the status quo (Webb, 1995; Crebin, 2001).

Lessons Derived from Practice in a Complex Epistemology

The adept practitioner envisioned in a complex epistemology of practice is a teacher who contextually frames the ill-defined problems she faces. In such a situation the practitioner uses her wide set of understandings to examine the vicissitudes of the educational act. Such forms of practitioner cognition empower the teacher to change her practice by making reasoned interpretations of the situation she faces. Such ways of operating allow the teacher to attack the sticky, ambiguous problems of the briar patch called everyday practice. Technical-rational knowledge of practice tends to ignore the highly important but messy problems of everyday institutional life while focusing on relatively insignificant but well-defined problems. Such well-defined problems tend to be technical—e.g., the five steps to constructing a classroom bulletin board—not ethical or normative.

Thus, the confusing problems of lived practice do not lend themselves to one simple solution that is final. Depending on practitioners’ values or normative assumptions, the solution to a problem shared by several practitioners may be acceptable to some but not to others. Values and values contradictions inform educational knowledge and answers to pedagogical questions. Solutions to educational problems will vary from context to context, as a strategy appropriate in an upper-middle class, predominately White school may not be appropriate in a poor school in a
heavily Latino area. Such complexity demands different forms of knowledge and practitioner thinking than the ones represented in a rational-technical model. An important question emerges in this context: what are the characteristics of professional knowledge that makes it useful for practitioners.

The answers to such a question are central to our study of professional education and research. Instead of understanding the dynamic complexity of such a question and the need for rigorous research and analysis, higher education has often retreated to the safehouse of “pure research.” In this conceptually truncated and epistemologically naïve domain professional education is positioned as an “immature discipline” (Ferreira & Alexandre, 2000) because of its immunity to universally valid pronouncements about its practice. Instead of demeaning the discipline because of its complexity, higher education be promoting the study of the relationship connecting research, knowledge and practice. All domains of higher education, all disciplines have much to learn in such study. Indeed, it might be argued that the future of higher education and educationally informed action may reside in this interrelationship. In this context knowledge is viewed less an abstract entity that can be stored in the computer folders of a mechanistic model of the brain and more as a living entity embedded in diverse situations and in practice (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Schon, 1995; Whitley, 1995; Lomax & Parker, 1996).

Raised in a technical-rational culture, practitioners involved in professional education ache for professional educators to tell them what to do. Responding to their students’ pleas to “give us something we can use,” they often succumb to the simplicity of step-by-step procedures—for example, the five ways to teach phonics to first graders. Here one can easily discern the way practice is abstracted from context, from a sense of purpose, or a social vision. When denizens of the modern research university observe such practice based pedagogies, they reel with disdain and condescension. From their exalted positions in the research university the very integrity of higher education is compromised by such low-level activity.

The only alternative, however, they can offer in lieu of such vulgarly practical practices involves passing along particular forms of disciplinary knowledge that is, of course, completely disassociated from the perils of professional practice. Again, questions concerning the relationship connecting research, knowledge and indeterminate zones of practice are erased as they are deemed unfit for serious academic exploration. The idiosyncratic dynamics of situational ambiguity, conflict, confusion, chaos, and complexity are epistemologically estranged from dominant forms of research in many disciplines. A complex epistemology of practice offers an escape from both vulgar practicality and knowledge abstracted from practice. Such an escape employs a variety of research methodological and theoretical discourses—I have referred to this process elsewhere as the bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). Using the bricolage in a complex epistemology of practice, professional educators explore the disjunctions and the stresses of the interaction of the triad of research, knowledge, and practice. In these zones of interaction researchers of the complex epistemology
of practice can begin to understand how to deal with the research problems presented by these messy domains of ambiguity.

Acting on such understanding, educational researchers/professional educators begin to validate the insights and concerns of practitioners and to take seriously the lived conditions of teaching. Teachers have been telling educational researchers and professional educators for a long time that empirical generalizations about practice have little use value in their teaching. This is why it is so important to think carefully about the types of knowledges that exist in the domain of practice. As we understand the different types of educational knowledges, we can become better equipped to understand how they are best produced, where they fit in a teacher education program, and how we might teach them. Professional education in numerous domains has never devoted sufficient attention to such questions. These inquiries are central to the type of research we propose to do.

Solving a problem or finding all the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle are not the end goals of research constructed within the framework of a complex epistemology of practice. This is not to argue that practitioners need to solve problems they encounter in practice. A key characteristic of the rigorously educated and well-prepared scholar teacher we seek to graduate, however, involves the ability to identify problems in schools and in practice that have not traditionally been viewed as problems. In this domain of scholarly practice teachers learn to ask questions that are normative and philosophical and answer them in relation to larger contextual insights. Such abilities are both scholarly and practical—and that is the recipe for good teaching for which we are always searching. Those practitioners capable of such scholarly and practical skills surely have reached a level of practice that could be labeled rigorous. Indeed, in rigorous practice the scholarly and the practical cannot be separated.

This merging of the scholarly and the practical in a framework grounded on a complex epistemology of practice would help professional educators and practitioners in all domains begin a new conversation with one another. It would also help professional educators begin a new conversation with the university community in which they are housed. A central dimension of these conversations revolves around epistemology and epistemological analysis. Unfortunately, epistemology has not been viewed as especially important in teacher education, teaching practice, or in higher education. Even a few philosophers I have spoken with about these matters find the applied use of epistemology strange in “practical” contexts. Calls for scholar-practitioners to construct their own knowledges in both curricular and practice-based domains still seem out of step with the dominant impulses of professional education and the academy in general (Noone & Cartwright, 1996; Munby & Russell, 1996; Goodson, 1999). It is central to our understanding of the research, knowledge, and practice triad that these dominant impulses be addressed in our research.
The Move to Critical Complexity

At this point it is important to argue for a more rigorous epistemology of practice, one that understands the complications of lived reality and educational practice. The epistemological concept of critical complexity helps us move in such a direction. On one level, the notion of the web of reality is merely a metaphorical way to describe the importance of context in the construction of knowledge, human consciousness, and just action. The more we understand the various contexts in which teaching and learning take place, the more we appreciate the complexity of the processes. The more of these contexts with which educators are familiar, the more rigorous teaching and learning become. I am not arguing here for rigor for rigor’s sake. The problems of teacher education and teaching are multi-dimensional and are always embedded in a context. The more work critical scholars studying cognition produce, the more it becomes apparent that a large percentage of student difficulties in school result not as much from cognitive inadequacy as from social contextual factors. Teachers need a rich understanding of the social backgrounds of students, the scholarly context in which disciplinary and counter-disciplinary knowledges are produced and transformed into subject matter, and the political context that helps shape educational purpose.

In the neo-positivistic schools of the contemporary era, learners’ lives are de-contextualized. When we examine the contexts and relationships connecting learner, culture, teaching, knowledge production and curriculum, teachers begin to move into a more complex paradigm. In this “zone of complexity,” learning is viewed more as a dynamic and unpredictable process. As a complex, changing, unstable system, it resists generalized pronouncements and universal steps detailing “how to do it.” Complex systems interact with multiple contexts and possess the capacity for self-organization and creative innovation. Each teaching and learning context has its unique dimensions that must be dealt with idiosyncratically. Our understanding of educational purpose is also shaped by the complexity of these contextual appreciations. Teacher educators and teachers who are aware of this complexity embrace an evolving notion of purpose always informed and modified by encounters with new contexts. This act rids teachers of the burden laid on them by a positivistic epistemology of practice.

Teachers informed by this critical complex epistemology act on these contextual insights to not only help understand a variety of educational knowledges but to grasp the needs of their students. In the critical complex orientation, such concerns can never be separated from the socio-political context: macro in the sense of the prevailing Zeitgeist; and micro as it refers to the context immediately surrounding any school. Critical teachers listen to marginalized voices and learn about their struggles with their environments. With these insights in mind, teacher educators and teachers delineate the effects of the contemporary political context shaped by corporations and economic interests; they build deep relationships with local communities, community organizations and concerned individuals in these settings. In this setting, students gain new opportunities to learn in not only classrooms but in unique community learning
environments. Here they can often address particular socio-political dynamics and learn about them in very personal and compelling ways.

Teachers informed by a critical complex epistemology of practice place great emphasis on the notion of context and the act of contextualization in every aspect of their work. When problems in their teaching arise, they stand ready to connect the difficulty to a wider frame of reference with a broad array of possible causes. When pedagogical problems fail to meet the criteria of an archetype, these teachers research unused sources and employ the information acquired to develop a larger understanding of the interaction of the various systems involved with the difficulty. When teachers fail to perform such an act of contextualization, students get hurt.

For example, a student who is doing poorly in school may be viewed as lacking intelligence. Upon contextualization, teachers may find that the student is disturbed by a problem at home or by an undiagnosed illness. His or her lack of academic success may have nothing to do with the question of ability. When teachers do not contextualize, they tend to isolate various parts of a pedagogical circumstance and call each a problem. They tinker with components of the problem but never approach its holistic nature. Educational data, for example, derive meaning only in the context created by other data. Context may be more important than content. These insights change the way educational professionals approach their work.

As is often the case, John Dewey wrote decades ago of these contextual dynamics. In the second decade of the twentieth century, Dewey observed that many thinkers see knowledge as self-contained, as complete in itself. Knowledge, he contended, could never be viewed outside the context of its relationship to other information. We only have to call to mind, Dewey suggested, what passes in our schools as acquisition of knowledge to understand how it is decontextualized and lacks any meaningful connection to the experience of students. Anticipating the notion of a critical complex epistemology and a postformal (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993) cognition, Dewey concluded that an individual is a sophisticated thinker to the degree to which he or she sees an event not as something isolated “but in its connection with the common experience of mankind” (Dewey, 1916, pp. 342-43). To overcome the reductionism that has plagued education and allowed for its technicalization and hyperrationalization, critical educators must take Dewey’s insights into account.

What we label knowledge, the ways it is arranged and presented, the ways it is taught and learned, and what is considered an appropriate display of having learned it is inseparable from the way we view the world, the purposes of education, the nature of good society, and the workings of the human mind. Such issues are connected to issues of power and questions of who is entitled to promote his or her view of the world. Thus, the contemporary effort to hold educators accountable—a key feature of current discourse on educational reform—is not some simple process where experts merely decree the proper instrument to measure the quality of teaching. Instead, it is part of a larger struggle between proponents various worldviews, social visions, and conceptions of what it means to be human. A critical complex
pedagogy maintains that in order to contribute to the effort to improve education, teachers, students, parents, politicians, and community members must gain a more textured understanding of the momentous issues being discussed here.

The worldview and epistemology that support standardization reforms assume that absolute forms of measurement can be applied to human endeavors such as education. The teaching and learning processes, advocates of standardization believe, are sufficiently consistent and stable to allow for precise measurability. The strategies that educators use and the factors that produce good and bad student performance can be isolated and even expressed in mathematical terms. Therefore, because questions based on students’ acquisition of selected bits of knowledge can be easily devised and we can determine a student’s and a teacher’s competence with little difficulty because such measurements can be accurately made, advocates of reductionist standardization see little complexity in the effort to hold teachers accountable. Critical educators aware of a complex epistemology of practice want to move beyond this simplified model, to help all parties understand the multiple contexts that shape in diverse and sometimes conflicting ways what is going on in such a process. Despite the pronouncements of many experts, the evaluation process is more complicated than simply designating the mastery of a fragment of content as an objective and then determining if it has been achieved.

Regardless of a critical complex pedagogy’s recognition of the complications and loaded assumptions of this evaluation process standardized reform movements continue to hold sway in the public conversation about education. One reason for this may involve the simplification process referenced here—they are easy for everyone to understand. Simplicity sells, complexity doesn’t. “We can keep close tabs on student performance at the school level,” the proponents of educational standardization tell the public. Using our mathematical measurement of student acquisition of content, they continue, we can compare the performance of schools, school districts, states/provinces, and nations regardless of the contextual differences that make them unique. All of these measurements and comparisons are guided by a faith in the value of standardized, content-based tests and the knowledge they produce. The faith in the meaning of what is measured by such tests is not grounded in some form of rigorous empirical evaluation. Indeed, such a process is the quintessence of reductionism.

The idea that such tests measure student achievement or ability and teacher effectiveness is an interpretation—nothing more, nothing less. Obviously, those of us who embrace a critical complex pedagogy have no trouble with interpretations—all knowledge is produced by an interpretive process. The problem here is that advocates of standardization do not reveal the interpretive aspects of the testing process; they present the data and its meaning as scientifically validated truth. A rigorous analysis of how such truth is produced reveals many interpretive (subjective) steps in the process. A critical understanding of knowledge induces us to ask that the reasons for particular ascriptions of test meaning be provided.
Concurrently, such a critical stance moves us to abandon claims of objectivity in such an accountability process, such an epistemology of practice.

Guided by a leap of faith in what tests tell us about the educational process—is the district wealthy? Are there many formally educated parents? Does every child come from a family whose first language is English? ad infinitum—advocates of standardized reforms have unleashed a process where students and teachers will be ranked and ordered to an unprecedented degree. Once students are placed in the low rankings, it becomes extremely difficult to get them out. Thus, reductionist educational reforms along with the testing and the ranking that accompany them are willing to construct an entire educational system including its purposes, rewards, and punishment structures on a faith in the worthiness of an unexamined mode of knowledge production and standardized testing process. In the norm-referenced measurements used in this context there must be winners and losers.

The fact that there are losers “proves” the system’s rigor. Students are pitted against one another in a fierce competition for restricted rewards. As teaching and learning are reduced to knowing what, meaning is lost. Tragically, particular patterns begin to emerge involving which demographic groups tend to succeed when schools are arranged in this manner. Often students who come from lower socio-economic and non-white homes do not have the benefit of a parent who has a college degree. In homes where parents perform low-skill jobs, families may not see schoolwork in the same way as upper-middle class, white, English speaking students. Studies of the social context of schooling point out that poor and racially marginalized students have learned to view academic work and the testing of technical standards as unreal, as a series of short-term tasks rather than activities with long-term significance for their lives.

Without such compensation or long-term justifications, such students may display little interest in academic work. Their poor performance on the tests and subsequent low ranking is viewed in the context of standardization as a lack of ability and academic failure. Their faith in the testing process moves educators to issue a scientifically validated assessment of cognitive inferiority to such students. Such a decontextualized, reductionistic view of the complex process of schooling and students performance in unacceptable—indeed, it is socially dangerous as it contributes to an unfair, unjustifiable sorting of the have and the have-nots. Teaching is simplified, teachers are deskilled, and students who fall outside particular “mainstream” demographics are severely punished. Even students from the mainstream are subjected to an inferior, simplified education. Even despite the fact that many of them may succeed in the system of rewards, their scholarly abilities are undermined and their view of themselves and the world obstructed. A critical complex pedagogy that understands these epistemological dynamics takes on an urgent importance in this social context, as it attempts to rectify the human damage caused by an uncritical view of knowledge—this positivist epistemology of practice.
References


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Never Mind the Bollocks
Here’s the Drake Music Project:
A Capability Perspective of Dis/ability
and Musical Identities

Michael Watts & Barbara Ridley

Introduction

As part of our evaluation of the Drake Music Project (Watts et al., 2005; Watts & Ridley, forthcoming) we attended a concert in which a number of cover and original pieces were played to what we considered a very high standard. Indeed, all in all, the evening was very enjoyable. Yet we were confronted with a problem: How to provide a theoretical framework for the evaluation that would enable us to focus on the identities generated by the music that was made. To put this problem into context, imagine two of these musicians who we shall (in pursuit of their anonymity) call Thelma and Louise. Both are guitarists: Thelma plays acoustic guitar and Louise bass. Both are competent musicians, although Thelma has been playing for much longer than Louise, and both got to demonstrate their competence with a few solos. Both are also wheelchair users and registered as disabled. However, while Thelma plays a normal acoustic guitar Louise uses a foot pedal linked through a computer system to play her bass. The use of the word ‘however’ in the preceding sentence is deliberate and the essentialist difference it predicates was central to our problem of using a framework that would enable us to focus on their musicianship rather than their disabilities.

The Drake Music Project (www.drakemusicproject.org) uses electronic and computer technologies to enable profoundly disabled people to explore, compose and perform music. To meet our evaluation brief of considering how effectively Drake was meeting this remit, we focused on the musicians’ sense of identity. Although they acknowledged both biological and social aspects of their disabilities, the musicians themselves were concerned to emphasise their musicianship over their disabilities in their own construction of their identities. In particular, they stressed that they considered themselves to be engaged with participatory music making rather than therapeutic music practices. As one of them explained:
Never Mind the Bollocks

Being with the Drake Music Project is a chance to be a musician and not someone with a disability. Because we don’t do music therapy… If people think we do music therapy, that’s what people with disabilities do. But here, with the music, we’re musicians. It’s just that we’re musicians in wheelchairs. But we’re musicians here. The music gets us away from being disabled. It’s like it gets us away from the wheelchairs. But if you think it’s music therapy, then that’s like it puts us back in the wheelchairs.

As this comment makes clear, they wanted to be seen as musicians and they wanted to be judged by their musicianship. However (and perhaps this should not be too surprising) prevailing theories of disability draw attention to the individual’s disability and therefore risk drawing attention away from the music. To address this, we needed an evaluative framework that would enable us to focus on their musicianship without either overstating or ignoring the influence of their disabilities.

To do this we turned to the capability approach of Economics Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (inter alia 1987, 1992, 1999). In this paper we consider the benefits of using the capability approach to address the issue of disability, music making and identity. We begin by addressing the role of music in identity formation and summarising the complex interplay between dis/ability, music and identity. We then introduce the capability approach and outline the findings of our capability-based evaluation of the Drake Music Project. The paper concludes with a reflection on the ontological benefits of using the capability approach in disability studies.

Music and Identity

From ring-tones on mobile phones to Wagner’s Ring Cycle at the Opera House, in one form or another, music—rather like love in the old Troggs’ song (Presley, 1967)—is all around us and, whether or not we whistle along with Walt Disney’s Seven Dwarves while we work, we could so far as to assume that music is universal. Indeed, in her defence of universal human values (2000, pp. 34-110) the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum includes music in her list of central human functionings (that is, those activities we value and should have the freedom to pursue, if we so wish) that make up the ‘good life’:

Senses, Imagination, and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education… Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing self-expressive works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth… Being able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech… (Nussbaum, 2000, pp. 78-79, italicised emphasis added)

This is not cultivation in the sense of high culture but of education and learning or, in Nussbaum’s terms, flourishing; and it serves as a reminder that we are taught
who we are and what we value. That is, we learn to construct our own identities and shape our own images of ourselves. The music that we listen to and make can play a significant role in these processes. Drawing on Paul Willis’ *Profane Culture* (1978) DeNora explains how musical tastes can be seen as analogous to valued ways of being, as a means of representing how we want to be identified (2000). For example, singing the (British) National Anthem is an expression of one particular identity while joining in with, say, the Sex Pistols’ own version of *God Save the Queen* (Lydon et al., 1977) is an expression of a very different identity (and one that we allude to in the title of our paper). However, this does not necessarily require choosing one identity over the other as we typically make use of multiple identities, drawing on different identities for different occasions, and it would not be unusual to find someone capable of singing both songs with conviction at different times and in different places. Similarly, the musicians working with the Drake Music Project have multiple identities including those identities associated with their musicianship and their disabilities (amongst many other identities).

In the complex social world we inhabit, one in which once-rigid social distinctions continue to break down, we have a greater responsibility for leading the lives we want to lead and selecting the appropriate identities to match (Giddens, 1994; Hall & du Gay, 1996; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Indeed, it has been argued that this has become something of an inevitability and that we have ‘no choice but to choose how to be and how to act’ (Giddens, 1994, p. 75). However, this should not be interpreted as the *freedom* to choose how to be and how to act because these ‘choices’ are ‘very often bounded by factors out of the hands of the individual or individuals they affect’ (*ibid.*) and the identities we choose—or, rather, seek to choose—may well be overwritten by factors such as class, gender, ethnicity and dis/ability. Moreover, there is a complex and dynamic relationship between the identities we try to present of ourselves and those that others seek to pin on us and, like so many other aspects of society, the power to manipulate these identities is not equally distributed. Those members of society with less social power, those on the margins of society, have fewer opportunities to present their chosen identities and are more susceptible to the identities ascribed to them by others.

The music we identify ourselves with, as well as the music other people identify us with, can play its part in the maintenance of these social structures. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has written at length on the ways in which musical tastes and musical identities act as a medium for the construction of social differences (1984). Bourdieu’s argument was that culture is a medium of interaction or a form of ‘capital’ that can, like economic capital, be used as a measure of status within social hierarchies. People, in other words, can and do use culture as a site and as a means of social competition; and, within this sociology of cultural consumption, the Wagnerian operas that make up the Ring Cycle are typically seen as having high cultural capital whereas reduced to a ring-tone on a mobile phone the music would have low cultural capital.
There is, then, a dynamic (and typically unjust) relationship between music and identity: whilst the music we identify with may, to some extent, help determine our identities, these same identities may also determine both the amount of cultural capital invested in any music and its location in the hierarchy of legitimacy. At the same time, identity (which may well be expressed through music) is not simply about who and what we are but who and what we are not. Given the extent of public uneasiness and even fear about disability, and given that we have multiple identities, other people may choose to focus on one identity (such as the identity of disability) rather than the individual’s preferred identity (here, that of the musician) as a means of reasserting their own able-bodied identity. This means that the disability may become salient and the musicianship either ignored or overlooked.

One of the challenges facing musicians with disability is to break through the social constructions that can leave people seeing only the disability and not the musicianship. Thus, the issue we found ourselves addressing was ‘not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them’ (Frith, 1996, p. 109).

Dis/Ability and Music

The distinction that the Drake Music Project makes between participatory and therapeutic music is, therefore, extremely significant because of the associations these two approaches have and because music can be used as a means of denigrating and repressing others (Willis, 1978; Bourdieu, 1984; Cloonan & Johnson, 2002). Most of the literature on music and disability is concerned with music therapy. There is much that music therapy can achieve: it has been shown to decrease anxiety levels of children with physical disabilities, assist in physical and mental rehabilitation and encourage peer interaction in adults with learning disabilities (*inter alia* Thaut, 1992; Paul & Ramsey, 2000; Hooper, 2002). Moreover, we found that participation in the Drake Music Project had therapeutic benefits for the musicians (Watts *et al.*, 2004, pp. 47-48).

However, music therapy typically operates within an essentialist (or individualist, biological, medical, clinical or deficit) model of disability which conceptualises it as an abnormality that is clearly distinct from an assumed state of human normality (Baylies, 2002; Burchardt, 2004; Terzi, 2005a & b; Watts & Ridley, forthcoming). Music therapists tend to ‘observe the client’s use of music, and how problems or difficulties may get in the way of interactive communication’ (Duffy & Fuller, 2000, p. 78) and the common assumption that disability is ‘some kind of sickness to be healed as opposed to a condition that can limit access to the usual opportunities of life’ (Everitt, 1997, p. 128) carries considerable implications for how disabled musicians are seen because musical therapy is characteristically seen as mimetic and often doomed to failure rather than as a means of celebrating individual expression. It is therefore not surprising that many people ‘still have an image of people with
disability not having anything to say’ (Prendergast, 1996, p. 88) and that music performed by disabled musicians is still often seen as ‘a second-class activity for those who must be, by implication, second-class citizens’ (Everitt, 1997, p. 20).

This highlights the significance of the Drake Music Project’s focus on participatory music and the musicians’ composition, exploration and playing of that music. To consider it as mere therapy is to establish a deficit framework that assumes deviation from an assumed notion of human normality and focuses on their disability and this prejudices the identities of the musicians and the aesthetics of their music. Moreover, and pragmatically, it creates significant methodological difficulties that we have indicated with the examples of Thelma and Louise: although both are wheelchair users and registered as disabled, and both therefore deviate from biological constructions of normality, Thelma’s use of a conventional acoustic guitar sits uneasily within a deficit model of disability alongside Louise’s need for specialised equipment to play bass. We sought to resolve this issue in our evaluation by turning to the capability approach of Amartya Sen because this allowed us to address the musicians’ disabilities (which prevented most of them from using conventional instruments) as well as the opportunities they had to identify themselves, and to be recognised as, musicians.

A Capability Perspective of Disability

The capability approach was developed by the Nobel Economics Laureate Amartya Sen (inter alia 1987, 1992 & 1999) and is concerned with the substantive freedoms people have to pursue lives and ways of living that they value and have reason to value. Although commonly associated with evaluations of poverty reduction programmes in the developing world it was not intended to be geographically restricted and it has proved to be a very effective means of addressing issues of social injustice. The main argument of the capability approach is that human development should aim to increase individual well-being by enabling access to the resources people need in order to choose and achieve what is important to them and it is in this acknowledgement of human diversity and its influence on individual well-being that the capability approach can make a significant contribution to disability studies (Bayliss, 2002; Burchardt, 2004; Terzi, 2005a & b; Watts & Ridley, forthcoming).

Sen argues that utilitarian measurements of income, possessions and resources cannot provide a proper assessment of a person’s well-being because possessions are not good in themselves but only for what they can do for people and people are not possessed of equal abilities to make equal use of the same possessions. Both points can be illustrated by the frequently used example of a bicycle (inter alia Sen 1985, p. 10) as something that provides no benefit to its owner if she cannot ride it because she is disabled or has never learned how to ride it. Similarly, a conventional musical instrument, such as an acoustic guitar, is of no value to someone like Louise whose cerebral palsy means she cannot play it. No matter how many guitars she
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has at what cost, her well-being is not increased in any meaningful sense by possessing them. The capability approach recognises that there is more to well-being than being well off and that a person’s standard of living ‘must be directly a matter of the life one leads rather than of the resources and means one has to lead a life’ (Sen 1987, p. 16).

This concern with the freedom to choose from ‘the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of life to lead’ (Drèze and Sen 1995, p. 11) provides a fuller account of an individual’s well-being but it also poses methodological and analytical problems. To enable this focus on freedom, Sen makes use of the concepts of functionings and capabilities. A ‘functioning is an achievement’ that ‘reflects the various things a person may value doing or being’ whilst ‘a capability is the ability to achieve’ and ‘is thus a kind of freedom… the freedom to achieve various lifestyles’ (Sen, 1987, p. 36 & 1999, p. 75). A person’s functionings and capabilities are closely linked but significantly different: functionings are ‘in a sense, more directly related to living conditions, since they are different aspects of living conditions’ whilst capabilities are ‘notions of freedom in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead’ (Sen 1987, p. 36, original emphasis). The difference between functionings and capabilities, then, is the difference between the realised and the potential, between outcome and opportunity, and between achievement and the freedom to achieve.

To assess well-being we must consider the alternative combinations of functionings from which a person can choose and so we must examine ‘the extent to which people have the opportunity to achieve outcomes that they value and have reason to value’ (Sen 1999, p. 291, emphasis added). These options form a person’s capability set. Capability—or the capability to function—represents the various combinations of functionings that a person can achieve and choose from. It reflects ‘a person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another [and their] freedom to choose from possible livings’ (Sen 1992, p. 40). A person’s well-being, then, is to be found in her freedom to choose from different possible functionings, different beings and doings, different ways of living life.

The Value of Musicianship

The evaluation concluded that the musicians’ substantive freedom to make music and to identify, and be identified as, musicians was extremely limited but that they were able to achieve these ‘valued doings and beings’ (or functionings) through the Drake Music Project with its specialised equipment and training. Musicianship was something these musicians valued and had reason to value. It brought them pleasure and enabled them to express their creativity. Participation in the Drake Music Project introduced them to new and different genres of music and therefore provided them with new learning opportunities that enabled them to expand their own musical abilities that enhanced the satisfaction obtained from
creative encounters with their music. It also provided them with opportunities for socialising with people who shared common interests.

Their music making gave them the opportunity to create and share something to be judged by its own criteria rather than with reference to their disabilities. Moreover, in composing and performing their own music they were engaging with something they had control over, something that enabled them to move beyond the restrictions of their disabilities. Live performances in particular, with no special allowance made for their disabilities, meant that they were just as likely to make mistakes as able-bodied musicians and their work as an ensemble meant that they had responsibility not only to themselves but to their fellow musicians and to their audiences. Music making, therefore, was a means of putting their disabilities into their proper place and of challenging normative societal views of musicians with disabilities. This gave them good reason to value their musicianship: it shaped their self and social identities. Participatory music making had the potential to enable them to transcend the salience of their disabilities and to identify as musicians who are able to both make and take music and who are able to compose, explore and to perform it.

The importance of this may be self-evident but there was a deeper significance that was made clear when other opportunities to achieve these valued outcomes were considered. Socialisation can take place through other activities that disabled and able-bodied people alike can engage in. Yet they did not offer the creativity of musicianship. Some of the musicians pursued their creativity through other outlets such as painting and poetry. However, these are more individualistic pursuits and, although they enabled socialisation with other artists and new learning opportunities, they did not carry the responsibility of group composition and performance. Nor did they necessarily allow for public demonstrations of ability. Sporting activities offer the thrill of live performance that was so important to these musicians but it is not something that everyone can, or wants to, take part in. It also tends to be segregated into activities and competition for the disabled so that although achievement may be celebrated it also reifies disabilities.

The deeper significance of their musicianship, then, is that there were few, if any, other opportunities for many of these musicians to achieve the valued outcomes generated by their musicianship and this gave them greater reason to value their involvement with the Drake Music Project.

Conclusion

As the same evaluative conclusions could be drawn from other forms of qualitative evaluation, we need to pause to consider why it was important to make use of the capability approach. The informational space of the evaluation did not focus on the musicians’ disabilities or the specialised musical equipment that signalled those disabilities. That is, the evaluation did not take place within an essentialist framework that assumed a model of human normality from which these musicians
deviated because of their disabilities. It assumed, instead, the complexity of human diversity. We indicated this complexity at the outset with reference to Thelma and Louise who, despite both being disabled, had significantly different opportunities to make music using conventional instruments.

The physical manifestations of disability, as well as social attitudes and political responses towards it, may influence the individual’s freedom to pursue a life that she values and has reason to value; and in using the capability approach to assess provision for those with disabilities we cannot overlook these potential restrictions on freedom. However, in recognising the inevitable diversity of human life, which necessarily includes disability, the capability approach rejects any normative conception of humanity against which disability is measured. Other models of disability, particularly essentialist models, assume levels of deficit. The musicians’ disabilities cannot and should not be overlooked but they need not define them. The capability approach, we suggest, is able to negotiate these issues by focusing on the ‘extent to which people have the opportunity to achieve outcomes that they value and have reason to value’ (Sen 1999, p. 291).

The capability approach required us to consider the musicians’ functionings—that is, those ‘doings and beings’ they valued and had reason to value—rather than focus on their disabilities or on the specialised musical equipment and training that signalled those disabilities. Only then did we address the physical and environmental factors that enabled or inhibited them to achieve these functionings. The significance of this is that it required us to consider the musicians first and foremost as musicians rather than as people with disabilities. That is, the capability approach gave us the ontological freedom to consider them as members of the extremely diverse human race rather than as being biologically deficient. And this gave us the evaluative freedom to focus on their musicianship without undermining their identity as musicians or the aesthetics of their music.

References

abilities, 13, 77-89.

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Discourse, Linguistic Production, and Subjectivity: Disney-fying Language

Joao “Jota” Rosa

Current conceptions of “curriculum” reflect historical tensions between various epistemological frameworks have historically been fused with an underlying subtext revolving around race, class, gender and ability (Castenell & Pinar, 1993; Kliebard, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Inasmuch as theorists and major pieces of literature have referenced one another and engaged in wider social conversations as to the nature of “worthy” knowledge and systems of dispensation and or creation of such knowledge (Apple, 2000), the curriculum has been incrementally constructed through the formation of categories that ultimately legitimate some forms of knowledge and in so doing systemically marginalize others. This process of curricular differentiation has over time created boundaries between the public pedagogical space and the school as distinct spaces leading to curricular segmentation. Not wanting to romanticize the notion of the public pedagogic space, in the same manner in which this space must be engaged such that we may usefully benefit from it, where it contributes to hegemonic forms of cultural reproduction that marginalize some while dialectically centering others, it must also be examined and if needed, challenged.

It is in this framework that the current project seeks to engage a public space that, while claiming a particular “innocence,” is certainly profoundly pedagogical in its capacity to oppress and marginalize in sustaining and furthering hegemonic forms of cultural re-production. To the extent that this public pedagogical space is freely accessed and its commodified products are consumed, knowledge production is proceeding outside the traditional parameters of the classroom. Not focusing on the “control” of the public pedagogical space but rather its active engagement as ultimately a rival creator of knowledge, my aim is to blur the distinction between the public and the educational. This blurring of boundaries, while certainly redefining the pedagogic space, will most assuredly also have to take into account newer forms of thinking about curricular conceptualization and cohesion.
Having earned honorary degrees from many institutions of higher education (UCLA, Yale, Harvard, USC), and produced numerous films and documentaries, Walt E. Disney has had a tremendous impact on the lives of Americans for generations. This influence increases exponentially as parents who grew up on Disney films become advocates for Disney products, hence Disney ideology as embodied in commodity production and consumption. As an instrument of deliverance, language plays a fundamental role in oppression and or liberation in this public pedagogical space. In a sense then, language is not a neutral device devoid of ideological baggage but rather, its reflexivity constitutes the very reality within which we engage. As such, a central proposition of the current project is to undertake an evaluation of the use of language in the construction of subjectification in the Disney “curriculum.”

It is likely, indeed highly probable, that the reader of this project will inevitably position her or himself on one side or the other of an ideological divide. The subject of argumentation is such that ideological neutrality, if it exists, is simply not an option. Some theorists, while referring to Disney have observed that:

Disney has been exalted as the inviolable common cultural heritage of contemporary man; his characters have been incorporated into every home, they hang on every wall, they decorate objects of every kind; they constitute little less than a social environment inviting us all to join the great universal Disney family, which extends beyond all frontiers and ideologies, transcends differences between peoples and nations and particularities of custom and language. (p. 28)

The act of trying to engage Disney is somewhat risky in that the historic development of the company has been such that it fundamentally represents a piece of Americana. The ostentatious act of attempting to question Disney ideology then becomes projected as an act of subversion that offends the sensibilities of what it means to be an American. Dorfman & Mattelart (1971) have concluded that:

We need not be surprised, then, that innuendo about the world of Disney should be interpreted as an affront to morality and civilization at large. (p. 28)

Fully conscious of the ideological divide, this project aims to look at the use of language in the creation of subjectivity in Disney animated films produced within a particular time frame. I will shortly detail the specificity of time and the parameters for the analysis that follows. At this point, it is vital that the reader understand that the Disney vision is being analyzed here as a particular Discourse that becomes embodied in visual form through a particular text.

As an inter-disciplinary and often contested term, Discourse is being articulated here as the

Different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-language “stuff,” such as different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing and using symbols, tools and objects in the right places and at the right times so as to enact and recognize different identities and activities, give the material world certain meanings, distribute social goods in a certain way, make certain sorts of
meaningful connections in our experience and privilege certain symbol systems and ways of knowing over others. (Gee, 1999, p. 13)

Disney produces a very particular type of Discourse. It is a specific Discourse in that there is a particular structure to the Disney vision; one that allows for some possibilities of outcome while simultaneously negating others. Some would argue that the Disney Discourse is in a sense heteroglossic (Smoodin, 1994), however, inasmuch as the Discourse is itself constructed against the background of the Anglo-heterosexual-male-able-bodied-capitalist norm, it is very much unitary. This heteroglossic vision of the Disney Discourse may itself be an illusion created by the relative explicitness or implicitness of the Discourse as temporally set in a “changing” socio-historic frame, however, even as the context inevitably mutates and the form adjusts, Disney cultural reproduction remains fixed within particular boundaries.

While the object is to do a linguistic analysis, in this case looking at aspects of phonology and grammar, since these texts are intricately linked through content and form, the linguistic analysis cannot be divorced from the context of production. In this case, the production of discourse is inextricably linked to Discourse. While arguing for the need to explore the symbiotic relationship between form and content in discourse analysis, Fairclough (1999) notes that,

One cannot properly analyse content without simultaneously analysing form, because contents are always necessarily realized in forms, and different contents entail different forms and vice versa. (p. 184)

Since content in this case refers to a series of visual representations, the analysis must then include not only tools that allow for a linguistic analysis, but also provide a lens through which these representations can be analyzed at a semiotic level. The result is that the analysis ends up being and encompassing a hybridity of linguistics in a structural sense and a social approach capable of tackling issues of ideology.

It is of course impossible to delve into the dissection of Disney’s ideological linguistic apparatus without considering the socio-historical conditions under which it was created and is currently maintained. An understanding of the development of the company can provide a lens through which the intertextual nature of the discourse can be made more salient and linked synchronically.

**Socio-Historic Development**

The company begun by the Disney brothers, Walt and Roy, is today a media and entertainment-empire with a vast array of diversified commodity production targeted at multiple audiences. While the Discourse has remained more or less fluid without moving too far away from a core identity, the company has had its financial ups and downs and gone through a process of sanitization as it has progressed through time by being socially positioned against other types of discourses that inevitably had the effect of sanctifying the Disney image.3
From its inception in 1922, the Disney enterprise has had a somewhat turbulent history of vacillations from bare financial stability and profitability to near bankruptcy and back again (Taylor, 1987, Gomery, 1994). Through a series of strategic financial deals, including but not limited to alliances with more profitable movie companies (United Artists and RKO), Disney was able to survive several financial crises. By 1941, it took the Government’s investment in using Mickey Mouse as a goodwill ambassador in the diffusion of ideological propaganda to save the Disney Company from financial extinction. Gomery (1994), is worth quoting at length here as he observes that:

The US government awarded Disney filmmaking contracts and authorized valuable access to chemicals to make movie film. From 1942 through 1946 the Disney studio produced numerous films for training and instruction. Disney serviced the departments of Agriculture, Treasury, and State and also the Army and Navy. Hundreds of thousands of feet were created on a wide variety of topics- from the topography of enemy-held islands, to support of new income taxes, to surveillance of enemy airplanes and ships. Disney came to rely on the government.

Historically this is of great interest in that it clearly reflects the government’s understanding of the capacity of even animated films in shaping the subjectivity of a mystified population. While the animated films were shaping popular subjectivity and harnessing support for the war effort, Disney comics functioned with similar aims in ideologically undermining popular movements in Latin America (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1971). For now however, let’s focus on the historical construction of Disney as a business enterprise.

Disney’s financial stability during WWII was somewhat undermined by the post-wars years as the contracts with the government eventually ended, but Disney of course had already made its debut in many countries and clearly was an advantageous position vis-à-vis its global position prior to the war. Gomery (1994) notes that,

In 1976 Snow White and the Seven Dwarf, long fully amortized, took in nearly two million dollars in one release in West Germany alone.

Even with spectacular revenues on hit years, the Disney company over the years fluctuated in terms of financial solvency as a result of not only bitter struggles between the Disney brothers, but also periodic creative slumps, particularly after the deaths of its founders (Smoodin, 1994). The arrival of Michael Eisner and Frank Wells in 1984 began a period of hit movies that was to re-position Disney as an entertainment power to be reckoned with by the beginning of 1990. An expansion into “R” rated movies, through the creation of Touchstone Pictures (distancing this genre from the Disney discourse) and an opening of Disney shares to upper-middle-class Americans (Gomery, 1994) brought in a new pool of investors capable of providing welcomed financial support to the company’s filmmaking enterprise.

The opening of Disneyland in Japan, and the expansion of its US counterparts, Disneyland in California and Walt Disney World in Florida as well as the purchase
of the ABC and FOX television network allowed the company to continue to grow steadily; but reminiscent of earlier epochs of financial chaos, Disney is occasionally still plagued by diminishing profits and vicious battles among the executive staff (Taylor, 1987). The success story of the mid-80’s was in troubled waters in 2002 when The Wall Street Journal was observing that:

Walt Disney Co-chairman and CEO Michael Eisner spent much of the past summer sparring with two key Disney Board members, Vice chairman Roy E Disney and his investment Adviser, Stanley Gold; both men have been critical of the company’s faltering performance and lack of management depth; the board recently endorsed Eisner’s strategic plan, but fallout from that meeting has continued.

By December of 2003, it was reported in the same journal that Roy E. Disney Jr. had sent a letter to Michael Eisner demanding his resignation and started a national web-based campaign to remove Eisner as chairman of Disney. Crystallizing this bitter feud among the executive staff, on January 30, 2004, the Wall Street Journal observed:

Pixar-animation studios, in a stunning blow to Walt Disney Co, has ended talks to extend their lucrative and long-running distribution deal for Pixar’s computer-animated films; the move represents a high-profile setback for Disney chairman Michael Eisner, an opportunity for other Hollywood studios hopeful of striking a new film-distribution deal.

The lucrative partnership with Pixar-animation studios, the producers of such big hits as Toy Story I ($191,796,233) and II ($245,852,179), A Bugs Life ($162,798,565), Monsters Inc. ($234 million in 2001), and the latest release, Finding Nemo ($339,714,978) with an overseas gross of $523,096,000 has been terminated in just another round of Disney’s financial ups and downs. Continuing the Disney financial saga, in February of 2004, USA Today was reporting that Commcast offered a reported $54.1 billion for the entertainment powerhouse hoping to create a through global network and entertainment empire.

Although Disney’s periods of financial stability and or turbulence are not the focus of this project, they nevertheless set a tone for the analysis of other facets of the Disney Discourse. In effect, periods of financial instability give glimpses into the disjunction between the projection of the happy, easy-going, cohesive camp and a reality of an ideologically and materially policed (internally and externally) social entity. The Discourse, instantiated as a text in the form of children’s animated movies, is “policed” in multiple domains.

Whereas society at large becomes the ultimate regulator of the Disney Discourse in opting to spend or not spend ten dollars to sit in a movie theater (more often than not it is more since it implies bringing the kids) to be re-trained in the logic of being good consumer capitalists and socio-ideologically positioned so as to voyeuristically have dominant ideological narratives projected through the “innocence” of Disney animation, the company is more than willing to engage
in all that is legally allowable and enforceable (and sometimes even that which is unallowable) to protect the Discourse itself.\footnote{4}

Jon Lewis (1994) has noted that in 1987, Disney filed seventeen major lawsuits, naming some seven hundred defendants in the United States and another seventy-eight overseas. The following year, one suit alone named four hundred defendants, claiming copyright infringement…(p. 93)

Perhaps the clearest indication of Disney’s legal policing of the Discourse is the contentious battle over the fact that some day-care centers in Florida had painted Disney characters on their outer walls. Disney’s legal staff of course filed lawsuits on the grounds that it was protecting the rights of the company. The centers were eventually forced to take the “Mouse” down and a rival company (MCA) eventually rescued the day-care by painting their own image (Flintstones) on the outer walls and throwing a party for the children at the school (Smoodin, 1994). What is of interest here is the extent to which Disney will go to protect the Disney Discourse. Clearly what Disney was protecting in this case was much more than whether or not the day-care could draw images of Disney characters on their walls. The fact of the matter is that those images represent a particular identity that Disney felt needed to be protected at all costs, or at least that they need to directly profit from their representation. The values and modes of being that become imbued in the characters become synonymous with Disney. This is reflected in Paul Hollister’s observation in 1940 that,

Article I of the Disney constitution stipulates that every possible element of a picture shall be not a mere pictorial representation of the character or an element of scenery, but an individual, with clearly defined characteristics. Disney lieutenants have grown gray in the service of repeating that Mickey is “not a mouse, but a person.” (p. 26)

The production of this or these characters constitute the creation of entities that embody and reflect particular values and ways of being that legitimize the familiar and de-legitimize alternatives. In fact, it is more pervasive in a sense in that the construction of self dialectically simultaneously constructs and projects the image of the other. It is in this spirit of rigorously policing the Disney Discourse and categorically bringing wrath on those who transgress the boundaries of Disney engagement (from consumption to critique) that Bell, Haas and Sells (1995) remark that,

When we corresponded with Disney personnel to gain access to the Disney archives in Buena Vista, California, we were informed that Disney does not allow third-party books to use the name Disney in their titles-this implies endorsement or sponsorship by the Disney organization. (p. 1)

In 2003, Disney filed numerous lawsuits to protect, police and enforce its values as transmitted through animated images. Legal actions however are not the sole recourse of the “Mouse.” Let us not forget that policing must begin at home. If the
image is to be created and brought to life and imbued with particular characteristics that become synonymous with the “American way”, subversion cannot be tolerated, even if coming from one’s own. While this “policing” is more effective and efficient through a process of internalization, generated by a prior rigorous enforcement of company policy, the process of material comodification and the structuring of discourse can not be subjected to the possibility of ideological vacillations. It is in the context of establishing and policing boundaries to this discourse that David Kunzle (1991) observes:

The system at Disney productions seems to be designed to prevent the artist from feeling any pride or gaining any recognition, other than corporate, for his work. Once the contract is signed, the artist’s idea becomes Disney’s idea. He is its owner therefore its creator, for all purposes. (p. 16)

The fictitious image of the happy Disney production camp portrayed by Hollister, even as it is complemented today by the courteous smile with an accompanying “welcome to Walt Disney World” must be contextualized. To be sure, the creation of the Disney image of innocence and the abstraction of the human condition from the projection of that immaculate trouble free world can be contrasted with a sometimes-turbulent work history exemplified by worker strikes and management feuds (Smoodin, 1994; Taylor, 1987).

Smith and Clark (1999) background any information regarding this aspect of the Disney enterprise in their Disney: The First 100 Years. Out of 211 pages of information on the Disney company and its history of animation and entertainment, a single mitigated paragraph appears regarding any mentioning of conditions that deviate from the creation of a mythical happy camp. Referring to a strike that occurred prior to WWII, the authors note that,

At the same time that Walt and his artists were soaking up the culture in South America, a union problem that had been festering at the Disney Studio evolved into a bitter strike. The strike over wages and union representation, would cause strained feelings among Disney staff members for years to come and would forever change the atmosphere on the Studio lot. (p. 52)

We have to assume that the workers who were striking for better conditions were not “Walt’s workers” and that what caused the “strained feelings” was the fact and not the conditions that prompted the strike. Lest one feel caught up in a time warp, some other authors have occasionally brought the disjunction between the “happy camp” and the lived reality of its subjects to light.

During the 1999 Christmas season it was reported in the Morning Star (UK),

Thousands of workers at Euro Disney in Paris walked out on a Christmas strike yesterday in protest at Mickey Mouse pay. The move necessitated the mobilization of the managers to assume the roles of the striking workers so as to keep the operation flowing in spectacular capitalist adjustment to adverse conditions in capital accumulation. The strikers were referred to as “a small group of excited people.”
The article further observed,

Disney’s current Chief Executive Officer Michael Eisner reportedly earned $14.7 million dollars in 1995. He earns more in one hour than a Haitian sweatshop worker making Disney T-shirts is paid in a year.

The strikers’ demands were not met and business proceeded as usual much as they had in June of the preceding year when the strikers had lost a civil suit against Disney.

In 2000 the Hong Kong Industrial Committee (CIC) issued a report on 12 Disney contract factories in Guandong Province, China. Needless to say, conditions were deplorable in every possible aspect. The range of infractions ranged from work safety to excessive working hours to the application of fines for talking during work hours etc. Since international conditions with Disney sub-contracted companies abstract the situation from a local level and project it to others (a dual victimization), even while the profits are clearly being reaped here, it might be helpful to remember that a few months after Eisner came to Disney in 1984, at $750,000 a year and a performance bonus that could reach more than a $1 million (Taylor, 1987, P.233),

Momentarily of course, the Smith and Clark (1999) text becomes somewhat contextualized in that the text was of course published through the Disney Company, hence the selective appropriation and dissemination of company history through foregrounding and backgrounding.

The availability of data on the Disney company is staggering to say the least, ranging from a narrow focus of analysis on particular movies, to company finances (Taylor, 1987), to the analysis of imperialist ideology as constructed in character subjectivity (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1971), to gender construction and the policing of Disney Discourse (Bell, Haas, & Sells, 1995; Giroux, 1999; Smoodin, 1994; Wasco & Meehan, 2001; and many more).

One of the more interesting of these analyses on the level of ideology was that done by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart in 1971. The authors of How To Read Donald Duck build a convincing case for the functioning of ideology through Disney comics in Latin America. They assert that,

Disney characters only function by virtue of a suppression of real and concrete factors; that is their personal history, their birth and death, and their whole development in between, as they grow and change. (p. 34)

In fact, the world of Disney can only exist to the extent that it is able to suppress all that entails struggle in the human condition. As in the case of the theme parks with the underground network of tunnels that prevent access to a daily reality of actual life and work abstracted from fantasy, the authors proceed to layout a complex formulation through which Disney, controlling for biological relationships, continuously extolling the image of the noble savage as being in a sense foreign and subject to domination, is able to intricately weave a process of gender domination fused into colonialist practices. In contrasting this idea of the child as innocent
with the theme of the foreigner’s innocence, Dorfman and Mattelart (1971) observe that,

There are two types of children. While the city-folk are intelligent, calculating, crafty and superior; the third worldlings are candid, foolish, irrational, disorganized and gullible (like cowboys and Indians). The first are spirit, and move in the sphere of ideas; the second are body, inert matter, mass. The former represent the future, the latter the past. (p. 46)

The projection of the “foreign reality” onto the noble savage is of course that which is commensurate with exploitative capitalistic practices in which the crafty theft of the valuable is justified by the moral and intellectual superiority of the central western characters. In fact it is not very different from the current opposite portrayal of the Middle Eastern as violent and unable to administer his own affairs, thereby legitimating the exploitation of the people of that geo-region by Halliburton. In either case, the media ultimately plays a central role in legitimating the dominance of western ideology and simultaneously ensuring the exploitation of the “foreigner.” In a brilliant analysis, the authors again observe that,

This world of projection and segregation is based upon the role and concept of entertainment as it has developed in capitalist society…all the conflicts of the real world, the nerve centers of bourgeois, are purified in the imagination in order to be absorbed and co-opted into the world of entertainment. (p. 76)

This projection, under the guise of innocent fun, must be contextualized within a matrix of the legitimization of differential power relations. Giroux (1995) cautions that,

As an ideological construct that mobilizes particular cultural practices in diverse regimes of representations, whether they be theme parks, comics, or movies, Disney’s appeal to pristine innocence and high adventure is profoundly pedagogical in its attempt to produce specific knowledge, values and desires. (p. 48)

As Wasco and Meehan (2001) have concluded, among the resisters (to Disney discourse) participating in the Global Disney Audiences Project, “Besides criticizing Disney’s corporate synergy and pricing, many resisters found fault with both Disney’s narratives and its depictions of women.” This is evidence of the changing nature of the contextual frame under which the Disney characters operate. While some may opt to see recent heroines (Esmeralda, Pocahontas, and Mulan) as independent and more aggressive compared to the older more subdued images of Cinderella, these traits are in fact contained in the realization of the final typical romance that must re-instate the dominance of the male character. This dynamic becomes pervasive in that even as these heroines are psycho-socially demonstrative of cultural shifts of acceptable norms for females, they remain bound to an idealized, sexualized aesthetic that itself becomes an entrapment. Clearly this dynamic reinforces the notion that even as the contextual frame explicitly changes, the underlying themes
of female subservience remain implicit in the character’s relation to the politics of the body and sexuality.

Cultural insights however, even among those who resist “Disneyfication”, are not without their share of contradictions. As in the Gramscian notion of hegemony, many of the participants in the Global Disney Audiences Project were able to mediate the psychological dissonance created by a nostalgic reminiscence of childhood by fracturing the Disney Discourse into the classic Disney (Walt’s characters and values) with the new Disney (commercialism and hyper-consumption). But even as the authors go on to observe that, “Thus, the new Disney- with its emphasis on synergy across media and heavy merchandising—is seen as the merchandisation of culture, and is rejected” (p. 335), such views did not necessarily lead to non-consumption but rather moderated consumption.

What the above referenced studies indicate is that there is clearly a particular discourse that is instantiated in the production of Disney animated films and that this discourse is not in any sense arbitrary. It follows a particular logic that is built into the company vision and that does not stray from what is deemed appropriate to be presented as Disney material. Departing from the ideological position that indeed only some alternatives are possible in the construction of this overall narrative, we are still left with a pragmatic problem; that is to say: it is one thing to say that such a discourse exists because of historic patterns and the impossibility of the existence of multiple alternatives and another to say that this discourse in some ways correlates with language as it is built into character subjectivity. In fact, one can even question the overall significance of language as an indicator of individual subjectivity in any sense.

**Does Language Really Matter?**

The question could only come from someone who has never had to deal with the issue in any meaningful sense, either as the speaker of a dominant language or as never having to be in a linguistically subordinated position. There is a vast array of literature (Baugh, 2000; Dillard, 1972; Fanon, 1952; Labov, 1966; Macedo, 2003; Pennycook, 2001; Rickford, 1999) that positions language as a fundamental aspect of identity. To ignore this body of literature is to invariably dismiss a plethora of research that situates language within a complex framework, whereby it is simultaneously constitutive of and constitutes differential power relations that are inevitably legitimized in hegemonic forms that legitimate particular realities and materialities.

Referring to the importance of language (Linguistic Capital) as a key component of one’s identity Bourdieu notes,6

Discourse always owes its most important characteristics to the linguistic production relations within which it is produced. The sign has no existence (except abstractly in dictionaries) outside a concrete mode of linguistic production relation.
All particular linguistic transactions depend on the structure of the linguistic field, which is itself a particular expression of the structure of power relations between the groups possessing the corresponding competences (e.g., “genteel” language and the vernacular, or, in a situation of multilingualism, the dominant language and the dominated language).

It is important to note however that Bourdieu draws a distinction between competence (in a Chomskyan sense) and linguistic capital, which is directly tied to the dimension of power one is able to instantiate in a particular linguistic transaction. For Chomsky the notion of competence relates more to an ideal speaker/hearer situation in which human beings are seen as capable of generating an infinite sequence of grammatical constructions. Bourdieu on the other hand expands this notion to one of Linguistic capital, where the linguistic construction and non-construction (in the case where silences are significant) must be contextualized appropriately to command authority. One’s ability to command a particular form of linguistic capital becomes central in the identity one wishes to project in a given situation, however, this capacity to instantiate a particular form of linguistic capital can only function where there is a legitimated unified linguistic field that itself presupposes a stratification of the dominant and dominated. In other words, the only way linguistic capital (LCAP) can function is if there is a differentiation in the linguistic field where linguistic variants occupy hierarchical power positions circumstantially, but where they are simultaneously brought under an umbrella of a master narrative. As Bourdieu explains,

The products of certain competences only yield a profit of distinctiveness inasmuch as, by virtue of the relationship between the system of linguistic differences and the system of economic and social differences, we are dealing not with a relativistic universe of differences that are capable of relativizing one another, but with a hierarchized universe of deviations from a form of discourse that is recognized as legitimate. (p. 655)

This concept is crucial for an understanding of the way language functions with respect to the identities one instantiates. In this respect, linguist J.P. Gee (2001) observes a similar phenomenon with the construct of social languages and the creation of situated identities. For Gee, the social languages that we use are able to create particular identities that we either identify with or upon reflection distance ourselves from. In either case, both theorists see the linguistic field as overlapping in a sense, yet both would agree that while different social languages may be needed in different situations to achieve different results. In a calculation of “linguistic profit,” it is certainly the case that outside of specialized fields (e.g. Air Traffic Controller speech, video game experts, etc) the language of authority is that of “mainstream” society.

Take the case of accents for example. At the level of linguistic differentiation, as social beings we are constantly evaluating, hence contextually adjusting, self
vis-à-vis others’ linguistic variations. Our adjustments, of course, create the very context which we either take part in or dismiss. At the most explicit level, the recognition of a speaker’s language as being different than ours becomes quite evident and positions the hearer for adjustment. Often this adjustment is of a more subtle nature, involving differentiation of linguistic varieties or specific accents. In either case, it is a fact that these adjustments are made and that whatever form of interaction occurs subsequently take these variations into account.

Accents, whether we like it or not, convey particular histories about us to listeners. In linguistic terms, an “accent” is the creation of linguistic stress in units of speech that deviate from that which is the norm in a given society. It is somewhat irrelevant whether we revel in our unique accents as identity markers (Brown, 2000), or whether we ardently attempt to neutralize them so as to socio-historically situate ourselves in a class-conscious society that equates phonological command of a “mainstream” variety of English a permanent marker of our social subject position. The fact of the matter is that one’s accent is uniquely meaningful in conveying an image of one who possesses a particular linguistic capital that may or may not be valued in a given society. It is certainly the case that the linguistic capital that one’s accent is able to instantiate is very much situational, though generally related to the hierarchical power relations associated with the speaker’s dominant language.

Consider the following scenario. Former Secretary of State (and shady political figure) Henry Kissinger, while clearly having experienced phonological fossilization (Selinker, 1972), in learning English, is generally thought of as an articulate and intelligent (even if somewhat shady) political figure. The fact that his “accent” is so pronounced does not prevent most people from ascribing these characteristics to the man. This is of course largely due to the type of accent that the man has; a German one to be precise. After all, most people do not know the man’s educational background in listening to him. The socio-historic positioning of German vis-à-vis English as far back as the colonial epoch (Crawford, 1992), functioned to create a situation where German is thought of as being a relatively high-status language. Although this status position has fluctuated temporally, particularly during America’s involvement in WWII, it has overall maintained a particular cache that other languages (and their speakers) have not always enjoyed.

Contrast this position with that of a Spanish speaker, and a clear difference emerges. While in the former phonological fossilization is experienced as a sign of intelligence and “high-culture”, the latter is clearly a situation in which the speaker would be interpreted (and often treated) as relatively inarticulate and “uneducated”. This subject position would be assigned as much through the historic background of colonization (and neo-colonization) as it would be by a conservative socially constructed xenophobic fear of hordes of Latin American immigrants who are supposedly at the immigration gates just waiting to barge down the door and take away working class jobs (Never mind the fact that they were here first). In either case, the fact remains that “accents” carry a particular cache that, if not determines, at
the very least *imposes* particular subject positions on the speakers through social conventions and biases. It is in this frame that Bourdieu observes:

... We know that properties such as voice setting (nasal, pharyngeal) and pronunciation (“accent”) offer better indices than syntax for identifying a speaker’s social class; we learn that the efficacy of a discourse, its power to convince, depends on the authority of the person who utters it, or, what amounts to the same thing, on his “accent,” functioning as an index of authority. (p. 653)

This constant or general attitudes towards “accents” must be differentiated of course from the construction of socially-situated identities (Gee, 1999) in the case of Anglo speakers of Spanish, in which case the “accent” is perceived as an asset. Whether they are perceived as assets or hindrances, numerous studies (Anzaldúa, 1990; Bourdieu, 1977; Brown, 1994; Labov, 1966; Pennycook, 2001) have attested to the importance of accents in affecting not only our perceptions of self but also how others perceive and react to us.

The case being made in this project is that Disney, being fully aware of these subtle but general attitudes, fully exploits them in the construction of character subjectivity and that in doing so, not only contributes in the perpetuation of these attitudes but also indirectly structures the materiality associated with the attitudes. Of course Disney is not the only contributor to this process, nor by any means the principal one, however, Disney’s wide reach in terms of audience gives it a particularly strong role in maintaining these linguistic attitudes, which are embodied in material effects. In this sense, critical theorist Henry Giroux’s notions of public pedagogy become central in illustrating the pedagogical force of spaces that exist outside the social sphere of schooling as a transmitter of cultural knowledge.

**Methodology**

To ascertain the role of Disney in the maintenance of these stereotypes, this study was divided into multiple components, including the use of the analytical tool of Discourse Analysis (Gee, 1999) in examining the construction of character subjectivity in the movies Aladdin and Mulan, and a separate but related component focusing on undergraduate students, aimed at investigating general attitudes towards the linguistic variations represented in Disney films.

The use of Discourse Analysis would require a dual approach based on structural linguistics focusing on phonological and syntactic variations (Halliday, 1984) and a social approach (Gee, 1999) aimed at analyzing the identities enacted by the characters in relation to these variations.

Cormack and Green (2000) clearly illustrate the possibility of conceptually using discourse analysis in examining the production of historical texts as intertextual in nature; that is to say, as speaking to each other in time inasmuch as such texts participate in wider “big C” Conversations (Gee, 1999) that originate prior to the text itself. This notion becomes highly relevant in that such intertextuality
simultaneously offers the possibility of assessing the “visible invisibility” of themes in textual productions. It is this possibility that allows an epistemological window on the identification of the “invisible.”

Prior to initiating the analysis however, it is important to point out that several key determinations went into the option of choosing these particular movies for analysis. No doubt, the reader can have reservations as to the “objectivity” of selecting these movies arbitrarily. Such reservations of course would operate from a framework that would suppose that any choice made could be truly “objective,” that is to say, it would establish the parameters of dialogue in a duality of “objective” versus “subjective” research; an entirely fruitless endeavor that occupies much graduate school discussion and is ultimately circulatory in nature as the very choosing of the topic of analysis is a supreme manifestation of subjectivity at play. Linguist Donaldo Macedo invokes the absurdity of this common debate when he notes that,

The pseudoscientists who uncritically embrace the mantra of scientific objectivity, usually find refuge in an ideological fog that enables educators to comfortably fragment bodies of knowledge when they conduct their research. (p. 76)

Having said this, the limited scope of the research would invariably require the narrowing of the research to two or at most three movies, of which any two or three would suffice, providing that the chosen texts would have as objects of analysis clearly delineated characters throughout the development of the text. In other words, whatever text was chosen, the investigator wanted to be certain that there was no possibility of an ambiguous relationship with the characters. The characters would have to be clearly represented as “good” or “bad” as articulated in the ultimate victory or destruction of a character in the finality of the text.

Another aspect of the determination of the chosen texts was that the investigator wanted to choose texts that represented (at least visually) a living culture that was outside of the social context of the United States. This was primarily to ensure that the syntactic and phonological variations and cultural assumptions encountered would have to be projected onto the characters, hence the possibility of examining existing cultural models as native to the United States or as text driven. These two parameters were clearly met by the texts under analysis, since in both characters are very clearly delineated and the settings outside of the “life-worlds” of the average American consumer.

In Aladdin, the character requirement is ultimately satisfied with the banishment of the character Jaffar through the astute context manipulation of Aladdin himself. The ultimate demise of Jaffar leaves no doubts as to the construction of morality in the text. There is a coveted prize (the lamp and subtly the affection of Jasmine) and two antagonistic forces in the personas of Aladdin and Jaffar. The development of the plot ultimately leads to the triumph of one and the decimation of the other, hence the resolution of the plot and the attainment of the prizes, the lamp and Jasmine. For the second requirement, the setting being located in India
fulfills the location of the plot development in an ostensibly different environment. The mythical city of Aggrabah necessitates the historical imposition of particular cultural norms, since the interpreter of the text hypothetically has no schema to draw from in the interpretation of form and context.

Mulan again repeats this sequence, though in a more intricate manner. In Mulan, the objective becomes the saving of the town, an objective that positions this character against the villain Shan-Yu. The plot development is ultimately resolved with the saving of the town, the banishment of the villain and the ultimate reduction of the lead character into a bride (the natural sequence of the Disney heroine). Regardless of the ideological apparatus that allows for gender dynamics to be constructed as such (that is to say, for her to save the town and the population only to be diminished and held captive to the status of “bride”), the banishment of Shan-Yu clearly satisfies the first condition.

In satisfying the second requirement, the setting is ancient China. The setting again forces the text creator to impose particular historical constructions in a geographical space that is outside the norm of white middle class America. This imposition of course, not only positions the interpreter in an imaginary locale, outside her or his immediate norm of reference, but even where an interpreter might have an understanding (albeit already tainted) of historical conditions relative to the geographic space, this understanding is played upon in the construction of character and national identities.

A methodological consideration in this endeavor is the unit of analysis. Why choose a particular set of stanzas for analysis as opposed to another? After all, although character construction must be fluid in the sense that the overall structure of the character must remain whole, throughout the textual construction different character facets must be must be foregrounded and backgrounded so as to portray the character as somewhat “life-like.” The methodological dilemma associated with this fluidity is resolved through an a priori establishment of analytic parameters.

In this case, the use of language in the construction of character subjectivity is being analyzed through particular “tools” of discourse analysis, namely, identity construction, relationship forming and the distribution of social goods (Gee, 1990). Identity construction as a constant in character creation is particularly relevant, as the use of “Cues or clues to assemble situated meanings about what identities and relationships are relevant to the interaction, with their concomitant attitudes, values, ways of feeling, ways of knowing and believing, as well as ways of acting and interacting” (Gee, 1999, p. 86).

As a category of analysis, “stanzas” relating to the distribution of social goods implicitly embed dominant values in character construction. In this particular case, rather than breaking down the dialogue into stanzas, in an effort to understand the visual representation of the linguistic interaction, I have opted to compliment the linguistic component with a physical description of the represented frames. It would be somewhat problematic if values embedded in the characters directly contra-
dicted master narratives of how characters should or should not behave. Likewise, the *foundation of relationships* is observed in stanzas that embody both of these former categories. Several conversational sequences reflecting these three modes were selected for analysis. Although this analytical format attempts to fragment these categories for the sake of analysis, often in everyday speech these categories overlap into a symbiotic relationship that allows for multiple functions to be carried on simultaneously; as such, the separation of these categories is an artificial construction, a tool to assist in analysis as it were. Figure 1 attempts to visually represent the format of analysis.

As the diagram attempts to convey, it is through language, or specific forms of language that identities are created, adjusted and re-created. At this point in the analysis, it is important to point out that we do not see an inherent systematicity of language that would “naturally” lead one character to speak in one way as opposed to another (hence the segmented connection between character and language). This being the case, the syntactic and phonological choices made in the process of character construction become meaningful in that they are one among a range of possible alternatives. In the first section of the analysis we focus specifically on the link between language and identity construction.

**Units of Analysis**

The first unit of linguistic analysis embodies two of these building tasks while alluding to the third; both identity and social relationships are central to Chapter Thirteen of Disney’s Mulan. Through this initial interaction between Mushu and Mulan, subjectification becomes crucial in that the characters are in a sense embodying, through linguistic interaction, their primary role positions. Mushu establishes itself primarily as a guardian of family honor and protector of Mulan. Mulan in turn has the responsibility of substituting the father’s role in the army thereby characterizing a dutiful daughter (even as the “substitution” would traditionally be fulfilled by sons). This subject position must be understood under a wider ideological frame where family honor becomes the distributed social good; that is to say, in one way or another, it is not only the cathartic agent but remains perpetually that which is coveted. It symbolizes Mushu’s return to an honored position with the ancestors as well as Mulan’s redemption with the family for transgressing her filial obligations as well as the established regulatory patterns of a gendered reality. Conversational

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Figure 1. Analytic Model

![Analytic Model Diagram](image-url)
sequence “A1” exemplifies the contradictions between gender relations and filial duty to family honor and wider social responsibility with the subordination of the former.

“Sequence A1”

Chi Fu: By order of the Emperor, one man from every family must serve in the Imperial Army. The Xiao family [a family member steps up, bows to the guard and takes the conscription notice from the guard]. The Yi family.

Yi’s Son [holding his old father back]: I will serve the Emperor in my father’s place.

Chi Fu: The Fa Family.

Mulan: No.

[Fa Zhou gives his cane to Fa Li and walks toward Chi Fu. Fa Zhou bows before the horsemen]

Fa Zhou [standing proud]: I am ready to serve the Emperor. [Fa Zhou reaches for the conscription notice]

Mulan [running outside to keep her father from taking the conscription notice]: Father, you can’t go.

Fa Zhou [turning to see his daughter]: Mulan!

Mulan: Please sir, my father has already fought bravely--

Chi Fu: Silence! You would do well to teach your daughter to hold her tongue in a man’s presence.

Fa Zhou [looking away from Mulan]: Mulan, you dishonor me.

[Grandma Fa guides Mulan back away]

In terms of linguistic production, Chapter 13 (conversation sequence A and B) is particularly fascinating with respect to stylistic registers (Halliday, 1985) or social languages (Gee, 1999), syntactic distributions and the use or non-use of post-vocalic R. Stylistic registers or social languages refer to the types of languages we use in a given situation. These registers serve to create socially situated identities in everyday interactions. Lexical choice and syntactic construction are some distinct ways of identifying social languages or variations in registers. As Gee (1999) notes,

Each social language has its own distinctive grammar. However two different sorts of grammars are important to social languages, only one of which we ever think to study formally in school. One grammar is the traditional set of units like nouns, verbs, inflections, phrases and clauses…[T] he other- less studied, but more important- grammar is the “rules” by which grammatical units like nouns and verbs, phrases and clauses, are used to create patterns which signal or “index” characteristic of whos-doing-whats-within-Discourses. (p. 29)
Discourse, Linguistic Production, and Subjectivity

Conversational sequence “A” & “B”

Conversational sequence “A” clearly demonstrates the use of language in the representation of a collective.

[Mushu appears as a giant shadow being cast on a rock with flames on either side. Mushu’s real appearance remains out of sight]

Mushu [in a Southern Baptist Preacher’s voice]: Did I hear someone ask for a miracle!? Let me hear you say aye!

Mulan [Running and hiding behind a rock]: Ahhhhh.

Mushu: That’s close enough.

Mulan [from behind a rock]: Ghost.

Mushu: Get ready Mulan your *serpentine salvation is at hand*. For I have been sent by your ancestors-- [notices Cri-Kee making a hand shadow of a dragon on the rock and stamps him down with his foot] to guide you through your masquerade. [bending down to Cri-Kee] *C’mon, you’re gonna stay you’re gonna work.* [returning to Mulan] *Heed my word, ‘cause if the army finds out that you are a girl, the penalty is death.* [big flames shoot up from the rocks]

Mulan: Who are you?

Mushu: Who am I? Who am I? I am the guardian of lost souls. [Mulan smiles big in anticipation of seeing her guardian] I am the powerful, the pleasurable, the indestructible [coming out from the rocks to show his real size] Mushu! Oh hah, hah, pretty hot, huh? [Khan stomps on Mushu. Mulan pushes Khan back]

Mulan: Ah, my ancestors sent a little lizard to help me?

Mushu: Hey, dragon, dragon, not lizard. I don’t do that tongue thing [flips out his tongue to show Mulan what he means].

Mulan: You’re uh...

Mushu: *Intimidatin*[g]? *Awe inspirin*[g]?

Mulan [making a hand gesture to denote his smallness of size]: Tiny.

Mushu [with a look of disappointment]: Of course. I’m travel size for your convenience. *If I was my real size*, your cow here [patting Khan on the nose] would die of fright. [Khan tries to bite Mushu] [pointing to the ground speaking to Khan] Down Bessy. My powers are beyond your mortal imagination. For instance, [leaning in and looking at Mulan’s chest] my eyes can see straight through your armor. [Mulan cover her bust with her left arm and slaps Mushu with the right] Ow. [angrily] All right, that’s it! Dishonor! Dishonor on your whole family. [aside to Cri-Kee] Make a note of this [Cri-Kee grabs a leaf and a pen and starts writing]. [Loudly with gusto] Dishonor on you. Dishonor on your cow. Dis-
Mulan [pleadingly while covering Mushu's mouth]: Stop! I’m sorry, I’m sorry [kneeling down in front of Mushu]. I’m just nervous. I’ve never done this before.

Mushu: Then you’re gonna have to trust me. **And don’t you slap me no more, we clear on that?** [Mulan nods emphatically]. All right. Okey dokey, let’s get this show on the road. Cri-Kee, get the bags [Mushu starts walking to the camp]. [to Khan] Let’s move it heifer.

In this case, the register or social language used by Mushu in meeting Mulan and establishing its own identity is an intertextual nod to an inflamed southern preacher who admonishes of the dangers of the situation while characterizing its own position as the salvation to possible doom. In effect, Mushu’s register or social language, as evidenced by phonological and syntactic output, is more or less static throughout the textual construction, becoming cemented to characteristics like copula deletions and uses of post-vocalic R’s characteristic of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE). By phonology I refer to the production of sound units or phonemes. The critical reader may immediately question the notion of an “essentialized” AAVE, yet as many linguists have observed, AAVE is characterized by distinct linguistic productions. Wolfman (1991) observes:

Phonological patterns can be diagnostic of regional and social differences, and a person who has a good ear for dialects can often pinpoint a person’s general regional and social affiliation with considerable accuracy based solely on phonology. Certainly, the use of a few critical pronunciation cues can narrow down a person’s place of origin to at least general regions of the United States, if not the precise county of origin. (p. 51)

In the last “stanza” of this scene, for example, Mushu’s phonological output makes use of a common AAVE speech pattern when the character states:

And don’t you slap me no mo[r]e, we clear on that?

The “dropping” of the “R” in “more” is characteristic of AAVE. While the dropping of this phoneme appears to be a minute phonological difference, it certainly is sufficient to establish contrast with the subsequent vowel thereby producing a distinct speech pattern.

In a similar instance of dropping a phoneme, when Mushu responds: “**Intimidatin[g]? Awe Inspiri[g]**” we note the phenomenon of consonant neutralization common to AAVE. Wolfman (1991) notes, that in these cases,

When the nasal segment represented phonetically as [ŋ] (often spelled ng) occurs at the end of a word in an unstressed syllable (as in fighting) it can be produced as the sound [n] (fightin). This process is in fact characteristic of AAVE speech patterns. Reflecting on this particular exchange we also note another common AAVE speech pattern, in a relationship of syntactic agreement. In this case, the negative in the sentence guides the use of indefinite form. In this case, the character could have perfectly well stated, “And don’t slap me any more.”
Wolfman (1991) further observes that,

In standard dialects, *any* is used in the postverbal indefinite (that is, the form comes after the verb in the sentence, such as He didn’t have any money) whereas *no* may be used in most vernacular dialects (e.g., He didn’t have no money) ... Many of the distinctive dialect differences of syntax involve agreement patterns between words or morphemes, and *they are the most prominent social markers within American English [emphasis added]*. (p. 59)

Similarly, Rickford (1999) has pointed out that among the features of AAVE are the realization of the final “NG” as “N” in gerunds, deletion or vocalization of “R” after vowel, more varied intonations with “higher pitch range and more rising and level final contours than other English varieties”(Wolfram et al. 1993:12; see also Rickford 1977:205). Certainly these linguistic features are abundantly exemplified in these textual productions.

Why are these features particularly important in this context? Such an inquiry is anchored in an ideological frame where lexical choice (content and form) is ultimately meaningful. If the reader will recall, one of the pre-conditions for the unit of analysis was that the setting and context would have to be imposed; that is to say, the phonological qualities of the voices would have to be “constructed.” This being the case, the register used by the character Mushu becomes even more problematic. The textual production in fact contains other comedic characters, yet these characters, while relieving structural tension through humor, are not ultimately portrayed as “bungling fools” phonologically and syntactically linked to a particular racial collective. The linking of character subjectification and a racialized group becomes more striking in the absence of similar constructions with the supporting characters.

The Disney textual presentation in effect supports and perpetuates this link with long-term effects as to our perceptions of subjectification and linguistic production. Theorizing this link cannot be abstracted from the structured materiality of the linguistically oppressed. In fact, Disney accomplishes this task selectively with Mushu’s character. If the characterization were done to resemble common speech patterns generally we would have to wonder why the supporting comedic characters did not for instance represent the common “R” “W” substitutions so commonly found in Chinese English speakers. The social languages used by the characters are structured so as to either conform or deviate from dominant linguistic conventions. Whereas Mushu’s speech continuously reflects characteristics like morphological irregularities such as syntactic contractions of “going to” to “gonna” and “want to” to “wanna,” as well as the substitution of “am not” for “ain’t,” other characters reflect more “standard” Anglo middle class discourse. Consider for example a sequence of dialogue where General Li (the hero’s father) and Chi Fu are debating the General’s choice in promoting Shang to the rank of Captain. This sequence of dialogue in a sense disrupts the hierarchical relationship of Shang to Chi Fu while solidifying the relations between father and son.
Conversational Sequence B

[Chi Fu watches and then walks into the tent. General Li and Li Shang are in the tent.]

General Li [motioning with his pointer to a map of the region]: The Huns have struck here, here and here. I will take the main troops up to the Tung Shao Pass and stop Shan-Yu before he destroys this village.

Chi Fu: Excellent strategy, Sir. I do love surprises, Ha ha, ha, ha.

General Li: You will stay here and train the new recruits. When Chi Fu believes you’re ready, you will join us...Captain. [General Li hands a sword to Shang]

Shang: Captain?

Chi Fu: Oh, this is an enormous responsibility, General. Uh, perhaps a soldier with more experience--

General Li: Number one in his class, extensive knowledge of training techniques, [leaning back smugly stroking his chin] an impressive military lineage. I believe Li Shang will do an excellent job.

Shang [excitedly]: Oh, I will. I won’t let you down. This is, I mean, I...[somberly] yes sir.

Several factors are apparent in this sequence. First and most obvious in this sequence, is the choice of lexicon used to establish these relationships. The dialogue certainly omits syntactic contractions like “gonna” in the place of “will.” The general could have in fact just as easily said “You’re gonna stay here and train the new recruits,” however this construction would not have been consistent with the image that Disney is attempting to project of standard versus non-standard speech patterns. Even more commonly accepted contractions like the “You’ll” for “You will” are reduced to the point where they appear non-existent. In fact, the very lexical choices, “Impressive military lineage, extensive knowledge, enormous responsibility” are those that reflect a more Anglo middle class discourse.

The coherence of dialogue is in fact momentarily broken by Shang in the last line of the dialogue while expressing surprise at the unexpected promotion. This deviation from the norm not only heightens the awareness of the formal speech patterns of the General through contrast, but also attest to a particular fluidity in the use of social languages that is absent from other characters. The linguistic disfluencies have a mediating role in the dialogue, they attest to Shang’s “normality” in being able to socially position himself and adjust to the on-going dialogue. This adaptation is non-existent with the character Mushu as it is also non-existent with the central evil character Shan Yu. The effect of these non-adaptations in speech is that Mushu is portrayed as being a familiar yet not to be taken seriously character who is constantly joking and shirking responsibilities while Shan Yu becomes so stilted and stiff through lexical hyper-correction as to appear “abnormal.” The
“stiffness” of Shan Yu’s speech can be clearly seen in a conversational sequence where his relationship to his soldiers is being constructed. In this scene, Shan Yu presents some materials to his men and in a pedagogic manner creates a socially situated identity of group leader.

[Cut to Shan Yu sitting on top of a tree. He cuts off the very top with his sword. His falcon swoops by and drops a doll. Shan-Yu takes the doll, sniffs it, looks surprised, and drops down to the ground]

Shan-Yu [tossing the doll to Hun Strong Man]: What do you see?

Hun Strong Man [feeling the doll]: Black pine, from the high mountains. [Long Hair Hun Man takes the doll from Hun Strong Man. Bald Hun Man #1 takes a hair as it passes by him]

Bald Hun Man #1: White horse hair. Imperial stallions.

Long Hair Hun Man [sniffing the doll]: Sulfur, from cannons.

Shan-Yu: This doll came from a village in the Tung Shao Pass, where the Imperial Army’s waiting for us.

Hun Archer: We can avoid them easily.

Shan-Yu [shaking his head]: No, the quickest way to the Emperor is through that pass. Besides, the little girl will be missing her doll. We should return it to her.

[End Interlude]

Anyone engaged with this text will certainly understand that these are the “bad” characters in the production not from the visual representations themselves but rather from the phonological and syntactic constructions; the voices are lower and syntactic construction is again stifled by the hyper-adherence to conventional morphological rules.

These constructions create a triad in terms of possibility of being. Mushu’s position is highly racialized and even where somewhat familiar is projected as a mischievous trickster who is certainly not the ideal. The main “good characters” are projected as being able to flexibly adjust their social languages in creating varied socially situated identities, and the “evil” characters are projected as in a hyper-corrective mode that becomes “abnormal” in its linguistic inflexibility. One can visualize this dynamic on a continuum of linguistic production, ranging from highly systematized (from the racialized character) to flexible (good character) and ultimately to a structured production (bad character).

In the second textual production (below) the same methodological pattern was followed. Again we see patterns developing in the analysis of the sequences relating to the construction of character subjectivity. In this production the distributed social good becomes power; that is to say, this is situational since power symbolizes something different for each of the main characters. For Jaffar, power is literally the
power of the sorcerer to command the kingdom, for Aladdin power is the possibility of transforming self to obtain the object of his desire (Jasmine), and for Jasmine power is the ability to control who she will marry, in possible violation of the law. Conversational sequence “B” is important in this production to the extent that it captures the flouting of Aladdin’s newly found “power” as a transformed Prince, hence the creation of a new socially situated identity on the part of this character. Interestingly, the scene also embodies a triad of relationships in Jafar’s challenging of the legitimacy of the new Prince as well as Jasmine’s assertion of individuality and refusal to be represented as a “prize.”

Conversational Sequence “C” (Identity/Relationship Building)

You need to say what’s being signaled by the bolding. (More and more fanfare build up until ALADDIN flies off ABU’s back on MAGIC CARPET and flies down to the SULTAN. JAFAR slams the door shut.)

SULTAN: (Clapping) Splendid, absolutely marvelous.

ALADDIN: (Takes on a deeper voice.) Ahem. Your majesty, I have journeyed from afar to seek your daughter’s hand.

SULTAN: Prince Ali Ahabwa! Of course, I’m delighted to meet you. (He rushes over and shakes ALI’s hand.) This is my royal vizier, Jaffar. He’s delighted too.

JAFAR: (Extremely dryly) Ecstatic. I’m afraid, Prince Abooboo--

ALADDIN: --Ababwa!

JAFAR: Whatever. You cannot just parade in here uninvited and expect to--

SULTAN: ...by Allah, this is quite a remarkable device. (He tugs at the tassels, and they tug his moustache.) I don’t suppose I might...

ALADDIN: Why certainly, your majesty. Allow me. (He helps the SULTAN up onto the CARPET, and he plops down. JAFAR pins the CARPET down on the floor with the staff.)

JAFAR: Sire, I must advise against this--

SULTAN: --Oh, button up, Jaffar. Learn to have a little fun. (He kicks away the staff and CARPET and SULTAN fly away. IAGO, who was standing on the head of the staff, falls down, repeatedly bopping the staff with his beak as he descends. SULTAN and CARPET fly high into the ceiling, then begin a dive-bomb attack, flying under ABU, scaring him. The flight continues in the background, while JAFAR and ALI talk in the foreground.)

JAFAR: Just where did you say you were from?

ALADDIN: Oh, much farther than you’ve traveled, I’m sure. (He smiles. JAFAR does not.)

JAFAR: Try me. (IAGO lands on the staff.)
SULTAN: Look out, Polly! (They all duck in time as the CARPET whizzes centimetres over their heads. CARPET returns and the SULTAN chases IAGO around the room.)

IAGO: Hey, watch it. Watch it with the dumb rug! (The CARPET zooms underneath IAGO, who sighs, wipes his brow, and crashes into a pillar. He crashes to the floor, and his head is circled by miniature SULTANS on CARPETS, saying “Have a cracker, have a cracker. The real SULTAN begins his final approach.)

SULTAN: Out of the way, I’m coming in to land. Jaffar, watch this! (He lands.)

JAFAR: Spectacular. your highness.

SULTAN: Ooh, lovely. Yes, I do seem to have a knack for it. (CARPET walks over to ABU dizzily, then collapses. ABU catches it.) This is a very impressive youth. And a prince as well. (Whispers to JAFFAR) If we’re lucky, you won’t have to marry Jasmine after all.

JAFAR: I don’t trust him, sire.

SULTAN: Nonsense. One thing I pride myself on Jaffar, I’m an excellent judge of character.

IAGO: Oh, excellent judge, yeah, sure...not!!!

(JASMINE walks in quietly.)

SULTAN: Jasmine will like this one!

ALADDIN: And I’m pretty sure I’ll like Princess Jasmine!

JAFAR: Your highness, no. I must interceede on Jasmine’s behalf. (JASMINE hears this and gets mad.) This boy is no different than the others. What makes him think he is worthy of the princess?

ALADDIN: Your majesty, I am Prince Ali Ababwa! (He pricks JAFFAR’s goatee, which springs out in all directions.) Just let her meet me. I will win your daughter!

JASMINE: How dare you! (They all look at her surprised.) All of you, standing around deciding my future? I am not a prize to be won! (She storms out.)

SULTAN: Oh, dear. Don’t worry, Prince Ali. Just give Jasmine time to cool down. (They exit.)

JAFAR: I think it’s time to say good bye to Prince Abooobo. Do something with the formatting—in the above scene, the right margin varies all over the place!

As we can see in this scene, multiple effects are being achieved through linguistic production. When Aladdin states, “Ahem. Your majesty, I have journeyed from afar to seek your daughter’s hand” linguistic dis-fluencies are used to displace the former identity of a common street boy to the embodiment of a Prince. In fact, while this appears to be a relatively minute change in dialogue, it signals that the producers
of the text certainly are aware that there needs to be variation in the social language used to make the character “fit” the scene or in the very least make it appear convincingly that the character is projecting this change. Not only is this done in terms of the syntactic construction with the dis-fluency, but, the phonological output (pitch) is controlled to indicate status differential in speech. Lexical choice also indicates an adjustment in social language, “journeyed,” “afar,” and “seek” are certainly part of a lexicon that a common “street-boy” would not be projected as routinely using.

This sequence clearly demonstrates some of the characteristics found in the previous analysis in that the central “good” characters are represented as having the capacity to moderate the social language to flexibly adjust to new scenes and interactions, while the “bad” characters are projected as relatively inflexible in linguistic output to the point of seeming “abnormal.” Jaffar exemplifies this alternate modality when he greets Aladdin by stating, “Whatever. You cannot just parade in here uninvited and expect to—” The character certainly could have used “You can’t just come in here” or “you can’t just walk in here,” but of course the substitution of “cannot” and “parade” for these other more quotidian linguistic productions would have in effect diminished the capacity of language to shape the subjectivity of the character in accordance with the parameters set forth for “bad” characters. Lexical choice then indicates a difference of being. In fact, where as Jaffar’s character produces highly stilted speech as “Sire, I must advise against this” and “Your highness, no. I must intercede on Jasmine’s behalf;” the King, certainly portrayed as a “good” character, is able to respond to Jaffar’s admonition by stating, “Oh, button up, Jaffar,” a clearly flexible use of language that is certainly reflected in the productions of all of the “good” characters yet is virtually non-existent in Jaffar’s language. Iago, the meddling parrot, a mediating character who by the end of the movie is incorporated into the camp of the “good” guys, is also able to play with syntax and in so doing is able achieve a type of generational bonding with the audience, particularly the younger viewers. When Iago right dislocates the negative in an interaction with Jaffar by stating, Oh, excellent judge, yeah, sure...not!!!, the pattern resembles a common linguistic output in adolescents’ slang in emphasizing the improbability of the statement. These fluctuations in language production are selectively evident in the characters and as such create the “normal” and “abnormal,” the “standard” and the “non-standard,” identities that Disney projects as “good” or “bad.”

As we look at another conversational sequence, we see some similar links between character development and language use. In this case, the scene reflects interactions relating to the distribution of a social good, namely the power sought after by Jaffar and contested by Aladdin.

*Conversational Sequence “D”*

(They both look up and see a gigantic GENIE lift the palace into the clouds., ALADDIN whistles and CARPET flies up to greet him. They fly up near the GENIE’s head.)
ALADDIN: Genie! No!

GENIE: Sorry, kid—I got a new master now. (He places the palace on top of a mountain.)

SULTAN: Jaffar, I order you to stop!

JAFFAR: There’s a new order now—my order! Finally, you will bow to me!

(The SULTAN bows, but JASMINE does not.)

Jasmine: We’ll never bow to you!

IAGO: Why am I not surprised?

JAFFAR: If you will not bow before a sultan, then you will cower before a sorcerer! (To GENIE) Genie, my second wish—I wish to be the most powerful sorcerer in the world!

(GENIE extends his finger. ALADDIN tries to stop him, but he cannot, and another GENIE (tm) brand lightning bolt strikes JAFFAR, returning him to his normal look.)

IAGO: Ladies and gentlemen, a warm Agrabah welcome for Sorcerer Jaffar!

JAFFAR: Now where were we? Ah, yes—abject humiliation! (He zaps JASMINE and the SULTAN with his staff, and they both bow to him. RAJAH comes running at him. He zaps RAJAH, and the tiger turns into a kitty-cat.) Down, boy! Oh, princess—(lifts her chin with his staff)—there’s someone I’m dying to introduce you to.

ALADDIN: (off-camera) Jaffar! Get your hands

In this sequence, Jaffar is engaging in the construction of a new socially situated identity as the new authority figure. This conversational sequence reflects some of the linguistic structures that we have seen in some of the other sequences. As we can clearly see, Jaffar’s lack of use of contractions help to create the linguistic “stiffness” or inflexibility that becomes attached to his character. At several points during this sequence he could have very well opted to contract his speech as in an everyday conversational style by substituting “you’ll” for “you will” as an example. Yet the character’s inability to manipulate syntactic construction creates a distance and formality that positions this character as outside the norm of familiar linguistic interactions. This positioning is also reflected again in the lexicon that the character draws from in the dialogue. “You will cover before a sorcerer” and “abject humiliation” are certainly lexical choices that we don’t readily find in the other characters. Contrast this with the Genie’s response to Aladdin’s plea to stop assisting Jaffar, “Sorry, kid—I got a new master now.” The use of “sorry kid” in this sequence organizes Genie’s actions as not entirely menacing in the sense that the very word “kid” connotes a friendly and informal relationship with Aladdin. The Genie is transgressing out of duty or obligation but not necessarily malice. In a
certain sense, it is as if the language that Genie uses allows the viewer to empathize with the socially situated identity enacted by Genie even as it is doing damage to the kingdom. This is yet another case where lexical choice indicates the ability of the character to moderate social language so as to appear “normal.” Whereas in Mulan, Mushu becomes a highly racialized character, the Genie in Aladdin breaks this mold to the extent that it is part of the construction of the character that it is able to mutate and morph into different personas thereby allowing the character to escape the process of racialization.

Although Disney is operating within an “English Domain,” the selective variation in the linguistic construction of character subjectivity suggests that these wider social attitudes structured in a binary of “Standard English” as familiar and “Non-standard” variations as foreign or alien, have been absorbed by the company and in fact become part of the apparatus of the construction of normalcy (Disney discourse), hence, they display Disney’s complicity in the perpetuation of xenophobic attitudes towards all that is constructed as being outside the parameters of “standard” white middle class linguistic variations. The Disney textual presentation in effect supports and perpetuates this link with long-term effects as to our perceptions of subjectification and linguistic production.

**Disney-fying Language: Assessing Linguistic Differentiation**

To test the systematicity between character development and language use, a study was designed to investigate not only the reactions that undergraduate students in a Mid-Westerner University had to different linguistic variations, but also the attitudes that prompted these reactions. The study was primarily survey research. The students were exposed to three sets of voices from the two Disney films and subsequently asked to qualify their attitudes about the voices heard. The first set consisted of three voices of animated characters from the movie Aladdin. The second set of three voices from the movie Mulan, and the last voice set consisted of a combination of voices from both movies. After the presentation of each voice set, students were asked a series of questions aimed at discovering which voices the students attributed to “bad” and “good” characters as well as their reasons for these choices. The results were later coded and statistically analyzed to determine the propensity of choice relative to linguistic variation.

In the first set of voices the students were asked to identify the voice belonging to the “good” character. In this series of voices, the investigator included as the first voice an excerpt with phonological stress on particular syllables deviating from “standard Anglo middle class” linguistic output, as a result this particular character appeared to have an “accent.” The second voice was that of the main character or hero of the movie and the last was that of the villain. As much as possible the investigator minimized the context by limiting the exposure so that the context or frame could not be derived simply from listening to the voices.
Sequentially the voices presented were those of (The street seller, Aladdin and Jafiar).

In the second set of voices, the objective was to single out the “bad” character. In this sequence, the “bad” character was in the first position, with the remaining voices belonging to the heroine and a mediating supporting character. Sequentially the voices were represented as Shan-Yu, Mushu and finally Mulan. In the last sequence, the investigator included all “good” voices, that is to say, no villains were included in the samples. The subjects were asked to identify the good character. The voices presented were those of Aladdin, Mulan and Mushu.

As is clearly evidenced by the corresponding graphs, the students were for the most part able to discern which of the characters had been assigned “bad” roles simply by listening to a sentence or part of a sentence from the characters. In fact as can be seen from the identification of the villain in graph 2, the students were able to unanimously identify the character. More problematic was the identification of the “good” character once the voices in the sample included only “good” characters. When this scenario was presented, some students had such difficulty choosing that they opted to label all three samples as belonging to “good” characters. Graphs 1, 2 and 3 represent these results.

Just as interesting as the individual identification of the roles assigned to the characters were the descriptors that students used in referring to the characters. Table A includes some of the more common descriptors for the “good” character while table B refers to the “bad” character based solely on listening to the voices.

This limited yet telling study clearly shows that particular phonological productions are being attributed positive characteristics while others are being perceived

Graphs 1, 2, and 3.
as negative. Further, these attributions are systematic and as such indicate a particular complicity on the part of Disney. How else can we explain the systematic correspondence between character production and linguistic output?

Any socio-positioning that allows the privilege of being unperturbed by the systematic way that students are able to identify these voices and the manner in which characteristics are assigned simply by listening to specific voices is deeply troubling in that it certainly reflects and even perpetuates a lack of empathy for the linguistically oppressed. Clearly language is playing a mediating role in the way that reality is being constructed so as align with dominant “mainstream” narratives, hence “white American, comforting and compassionate are diametrically opposed to “threatening, sinister and deceitful.” Linguo-racism’ is grounded in material realities and inextricably linked to dimensions of power that ultimately reproduce hegemonic forms of control through forms of cultural reproduction.

The filtering of these pervasive ideological discourses in the reproduction of cultural forms necessarily creates an exigency for the production of counter discourses that strategically undermine econo-viability of sustaining these Discourses while simultaneously positing alternate possibilities grounded in more humane representational forms. The point of this entire project is not to say in any way that there are specific people in the Disney company that are systematically conspiring to create these images through the use of language, but rather that Disney, to the extent that it appropriates a wider discourse on what is the norm in terms of language attitudes, fully exploits these attitudes and in so doing perpetuates stereotypes which in the long run structure the very materiality of those who find themselves subordinated linguistically.

The linking of the ideological positions espoused here with curricular practice sets forth a synergy between the public sphere and curriculum development and implementation. This link allows for a re-conceptualization of curriculum through an explosion of possibilities that would create a new type of cohesion in curricular development; one that would necessarily venture beyond the educational sphere as currently conceptualized to disrupt the linearity of curriculum as currently conceived while creating a pedagogical space where the boundaries between the public and the educational spheres become fragmented. This fragmentation would then allow a permeability of content that allows for the re-conceptualization of curricula. This disruption however, would not only require an alternate way of conceptualizing curricular cohesion, hence appeasing those who favor the primacy of regulation and
governmentality as structured into the current mode, but simultaneously require a post-progressive pedagogy that is willing to not only use rival epistemological frameworks but also open possibilities as to new methods of conceiving and evaluating what gets counted as knowledge.

Once we break down the barriers between the public and the educational, possibilities become limitless in that reality can better be engaged from multiple dimensions without limiting the inherently pedagogical space of the public through the fragmentation of knowledge. Given the adjustments and mutations of market economies that ordinarily seek to increase commodification and consumption, it only seems fitting that the educational establishment capitalize on the availability of these culturally embedded texts for an active engagement with a vast array of social justice themes such as the permanence of racism through linguistic production. The analysis of language production in the public pedagogic space can lead to a creative tension that ultimately opens spaces of dialogue, a necessary step toward transformative change.

Notes

1 Dorfman & Mattelart, (1971) have articulately argued that Disney’s system of cultural reproduction are in fact far from innocent in that in the Latin American context they were strategically used to undermine popular movements and the development of a popular consciousness that questioned American social, cultural and political ideology.

2 The term is used here in the Bakhtinian sense of the language of texts as being composed of multiple competing genres.

3 Dorfman & Mattelart (1971) have argued Disney’s “clean” image as it is experienced today is the result of the positioning of Disney films against a different genre of films following World War II.

4 Henry Giroux argues that some of the practices engaged in by Disney in some respects including the acquisition of land in central Florida were legally questionable.

5 In a linguistic sense, backgrounding here refers to the organizational manner in which information is linguistically coded and subordinated to other textual information as to appear to be minimally relevant in relation to the main idea of a text.

6 Bourdieu conceives the operationalization of language as contained within a linguistic field that is unified thru the stratification of linguistic variants.


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