

**CONSCIOUS PRACTICE IN EDUCATION:
EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL EXPLORATIONS**

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Faculty of Education and Social Science
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of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

by
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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL WORK

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted towards a degree at any other university and that the ideas represent original scholarship.

Derek Greenfield

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ABSTRACT

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It is clear that large numbers of tertiary students – particularly those from socially marginalized populations – are not adequately served by traditional models and modalities of education, with the disparate performance rates of majority and minority group members ultimately functioning to reproduce patterns of social inequality. I contend that perhaps even more troubling than these sociological realities is the existence of an ideological underpinning that treats traditional classroom and institutional practices as normative and thus obscures the hegemonic nature of these phenomena. In turn, through the reification of dominant beliefs and habits, the possibilities for more progressive thought and action are inhibited.

This thesis addresses the need for educators to consciously interrogate the powerful belief systems that pervade educational discourse and behavior in order to disrupt oppressive conditions. By introducing the notion of ‘conscious practice,’ I suggest that when educators carefully consider their own hidden cultural biases, seek to more fully understand the perspectives internalized by students, and appreciate the socio-political context in which they operate, they will be in a better position to move towards inclusive and meaningful approaches. Drawing from the central tenets of social justice education, I suggest that lecturers and administrators must intentionally endeavor to promote innovative strategies and structures that enhance learning outcomes for all students and create the conditions for social transformation. The essays contained within this thesis deliver a thorough treatment of this theoretical background as well as provide concrete techniques for bringing these goals to reality.

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I have also been fortunate to encounter two educators who have operated as academic role models, demonstrating a genuine commitment to utilizing scholarship as a vehicle for social justice. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Professor James Banks of the University of Washington for his mentoring and his life-long dedication to multicultural education. Sincere thanks are also extended to Professor Rajendra Chetty, my doctoral program supervisor at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, for perpetual optimism, vigorous intellectual engagement, and ever-present support.

Finally, I wish to thank all of the students I have been honored to work with throughout my years of teaching. It is with you in mind that I resolved to complete this project, in the hopes that perhaps these ideas can play some part in encouraging progressive thought and practice in education. May we all endeavor to collaborate in advancing habits of mind, heart, and action that can ultimately generate a more humane and egalitarian world.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 The contemporary challenge

In a recent editorial published in Harvard University's daily newspaper, Georgi (2006) critiques the longstanding tradition of teaching as a largely solitary activity, challenging his faculty colleagues to embrace the benefits of collaborative approaches that can generate more innovative habits in the classroom. While sophisticated paradigms and practices in the teaching and learning process are necessary to achieve higher academic performance among all students, it seems axiomatic that the deleterious consequences of ineffectual paradigms will have a greater effect on students from marginalized populations. The challenge is for both educators and administrators to critically evaluate dominant philosophies as well as to question whether operative structures sufficiently encourage and support progressive professional development.

In particular, the persistent achievement gap in higher education attests to the need to confront oppressive practices embedded within the fabric of classrooms and institutions (Roach, 2004). Volumes of research have addressed the myriad challenges faced by postsecondary students of color, particularly at predominantly White campuses that may not always establish welcoming environments (Hurtado et al, 2003). While it is critical to acknowledge a host of relevant factors that exacerbate the problem -- from the lack of culturally relevant activities (Terrell, Rudy, & Cheatham, 1993) to ineffective approaches for advising (Gilbert, 2003) -- alienating and oppressive classrooms have perhaps the greatest impact on the rates of performance and persistence among these students. This thesis will challenge educators to confront the belief systems within themselves and their institutions. In turn, the recommendations presented will attest to the benefits not only for students of color, but rather, for all of our learners.

1.2 Epistemological focus: Conscious practice in education

This portfolio of journal articles contains six essays coalescing under the unifying theme of a construct I have labeled 'conscious practice' in education. Drawing from Brookfield's (1995) concept of 'reflective practice' and the notion of 'consciousness' espoused by Freire (1970), I endeavor to promote an approach that encourages educators to not only interrogate the epistemological and philosophical foundations of their teaching, but to also proactively envision praxis-based solutions to the presence of inequality in the classroom and in systems of education in general. I suggest that creative practices must be developed and implemented to ensure more equal opportunity for every student, with these transformative strategies more likely to engender academic success. While ostensibly relevant for all educators, the issues comprising the focus of this thesis will primarily center on manifestations in higher education.

These papers collectively demonstrate how dominant modalities in the theoretical, pedagogical, and institutional domains intersect to perpetuate existing practice. In addition to examining their own belief systems, classroom teachers are prompted to investigate the ways in which larger institutional and societal values insinuate themselves into their ways of being and doing. Building from Bourdieu's (1977) notion of habitus as the culturally bound meanings and definitions internalized by members, I suggest that the traditional 'education habitus' is treated in normative fashion at the institutional level and therefore becomes unconsciously assimilated into the worldview of many educators. By failing to question traditional classroom beliefs and institutional arrangements, practitioners become less likely to envision more meaningful, comprehensive approaches.

Despite the concerted efforts of multiculturalists (e.g. Banks, 2006) to contest dominant ideological conditions, the transcendent narrative of the educational establishment continues to

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privilege a positivist epistemological stance (Code, 1991) that obscures the sociopolitical dynamics of knowledge construction and promotion. Thus, by failing to consciously question and critique these beliefs and practices, educators become co-conspirators in the reification of hegemonic arrangements. Indeed, “ideology is most powerful when invisible” (Burkitt & Spiers, 1983: 12), since as Hall (1990: 10) contends, “our formulations seem to be simple descriptive statements about how things are, or what we can ‘take-for-granted.’” More than being unaware of these conditions, many educators fail to even see the validity in challenging these assumed truths and thus create a formidable barrier to potential growth.

The position taken here embraces King’s (1991:135) discussion of dysconscious racism as the “uncritical habit of the mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given.” Essentially, ‘our’ forms of knowledge and the mechanisms for transmission are normalized and naturalized, with individuals who attempt to contest and resist these arrangements often facing marginalization. While perhaps not always intentionally oppressive, a state of dysconsciousness still yields the perpetuation of practices disadvantaging certain groups of learners. In turn, as a result of this lack of careful and constant interrogation, hegemonic thought and action in education become reified.

For example, Lewis’ (2003) ethnographic account of public schools attests to the existence of a hidden curriculum that teaches powerful racialized messages, even when school personnel remain unaware of the existence of such institutional socialization. Guided by the flawed support of ‘color blindness’ as an optimal strategy for achieving equality, teachers and administrators evade frank discussions of how school practices such as tracking result in the concretization of racial inequality -- with the silence essentially affirming the ‘correctness’ of these patterns. Thus, despite claims of being the ‘great equalizer,’ educational institutions

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fundamentally serve the interests of those in power (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) and ultimately reinforce dimensions of social inequality (Giroux, 1983). As MacLeod (1995: 14) asserts, the illusion and promotion of the meritocratic myth hides the process of “converting social hierarchies into academic hierarchies.”

On the pragmatic classroom level, the work of Medin and Atran (2004) has demonstrated the pitfalls of the epistemological disconnect between the worldview of the scientific community and cultural groups that construct knowledge in alternate ways. For example, they point out how sections on ecology in grade school science textbooks are typically placed in later chapters and treat people as distinct from the environment; however, members of the Menominee tribe conceptualize humans as inextricably woven into the fabric of nature and grant primacy to an ecological approach. By divorcing these concepts, textbooks and teachers create an alienating learning environment for these children, and their test scores drop from above the national standard to far below the mark over the course of a few years. It is critical to note that the authors of these textbooks are, for the most part, postsecondary lecturers -- whose frameworks continue to be passed down to their own students and to subsequent generations.

The centrality of social class has been a less investigated factor in appreciating potential disparities between the worldviews of educators and students. Payne’s (2001) work on the ‘hidden rules of class’ suggests that young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds possess structures of understanding and behavior that contradict the middle-class expectations of schools. However, as Gorski (2006) asserts, Payne’s popular ideas in teacher training programs have ultimately operated to dangerously propagate a ‘blame the victim’ mentality. He argues that Payne views these young people through a deficit model and ignores the ‘socio-political context of schooling’ (Nieto, 2004) that advantages the habits and knowledge

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of wealthier students (Tozer, 2000). Brantlinger's (2003) discussion of the conservative nature of middle-class parents who seek to preserve economic and emotional security through support of conservative ideology seemingly applies to many educators as well. Less attention is paid to transforming schools to become more inclusive than is the emphasis on supposedly 'fixing' the disenfranchised. Thus, even when these issues are consciously addressed, the hegemonic voice often drowns out more progressive approaches.

With this ideological backdrop, the tendency against conscious practice trickles down to the individual instructor. Indeed, it is my contention that, for a variety of reasons, classroom educators often become so accustomed to their belief systems that they begin to construct them as inherently normative. Palmer's (1997) admonition of the need to privilege matters of the human spirit -- that quality teaching requires self-knowledge and subsequent exploration of the student perspective -- is not practiced widely enough.

This problematic condition is perpetuated by the reality that most graduate students receive little exposure to the scholarship of teaching and learning or opportunities that could encourage critical thought about pedagogy and culture (Gelman, 2005). While elementary and secondary teacher training programs may be justifiably criticized for their shortcomings, most pre-service schoolteachers at least encounter some of these issues. In contrast, the vast majority of individuals who enter the professoriate typically are not trained in critical pedagogy or instructional design -- and as a result, they tend to replicate the patterns modeled by their own professors (Baker, 1998). In my view, the situation is exacerbated by the notion that professors are trained to see themselves as 'experts,' thus obscuring the need to interrogate the patterns of knowledge construction and pedagogical practice in their fields.

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As Bok (2006) notes in his recent critique of higher education, central courses in the undergraduate curriculum are largely taught by inexperienced teachers while over ninety percent veteran professors routinely reject the use of innovative approaches that have been proven to produce stronger performance among students. He suggests, “To most faculty members, teaching is an art that is either too simple to require formal training, too personal to be taught to others, or too innate to be conveyed to anyone lacking the necessary gifts” (Bok, 2005: 2). The problem emanates from the reality that doctoral programs privilege research and devalue teaching, even though teaching ends up occupying the bulk of time in professors’ lives. One of my mentors in graduate school informed me that her tenure committee expressed concern that the student evaluations for her courses were ‘too good,’ indicating that she was spending too much time on teaching and far too little on the supposedly transcendent obligation of research.

Some emerging scholarship has begun to more intentionally investigate these matters in higher education (Obidah, 2000). Howell and Tuitt (2003) provide a thoughtful collection of essays addressing relevant themes and include their own meaningful commentary about the necessity of an ‘inclusive pedagogy,’ yet I suggest that far greater attention is paid to understanding practices than interrogating the personal philosophies or biases underpinning this work. Darder (1996: 2) writes, “Prior to any engagement with instrumental questions of practice, educators must delve rigorously into those specific theoretical issues that are fundamental to the establishment of a culturally democratic foundation for a critical bicultural pedagogy in the classroom.” Again, while the intention of establishing critical and progressive models is laudable, I would again contend that self-reflective work ought to precede theoretical analyses in order to better understand the fundamental sources of our approaches.

In the end, I suggest that conscious practice can lead to a meaningful evolution of paradigms, perspectives, and policies. While the initial thrust of the thesis centers around the research problem of addressing the pedagogical factors implicated in the underperformance of students of color, the approaches presented here are fundamentally guided by the principles of universal liberation. Thus, in addition to promoting equality for any members of oppressed populations, it is presumed that this framework will establish more humane and meaningful classrooms and institutions that can better educate every student.

1.3 Format of this thesis: Epistemology, connectivity, and intentional proactivism

Clearly, to accomplish this goal, considerable work needs to be done, and this text endeavors to play a role in stimulating thought and action. In contrast with the traditional thesis format, I have intentionally adopted the ‘journal article’ style for both epistemological and professional purposes. For some time, scholars in the science fields have critiqued the limiting notion of the traditional dissertation (Monaghan, 1989), asserting that the format does not adequately prepare postgraduate students for life in the academy, which revolves more around writing journal-length papers than lengthy books (Duke & Beck, 1999). Furthermore, as Gerber (2000) notes, the journal option allows for greater dissemination of ideas, particularly when targeting practitioner-based journals. Reflecting my interest in pursuing equity in education, I have endeavored to produce scholarship to be published in a wide variety of journals -- particularly those appealing to educators who grant primacy to their teaching responsibilities. Using a blend of disparate methodological and discursive styles, the articles are intended to offer a comprehensive examination of practice and possibility.

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As indicated in the following summaries, the works move from the level of advocating individual introspection to addressing theoretical concerns to providing concrete pedagogical techniques to promoting institutional reform. While privileging the development of new approaches, the thesis also incorporates ethnographic accounts from the classroom -- embracing the postmodern contention that suggests that personal evidence and stories can serve as scholarly evidence (Collins, 2000). I contend that, with the complexity of the human experience and the learning process, a singular epistemological viewpoint seems problematic. Indeed, since this thesis argues that learning is a cultural phenomenon, one could not reduce the educational enterprise to one presumably universal paradigm. Thus, the eclectic approach taken in this thesis embodies this notion of multiplicity to ensure a diversity of insights and models. It is ironic that many scholars who purportedly embrace polyvocality ultimately produce rigid theoretical frameworks that resist divergent perspectives.

There is, however, a level of connectivity among the different chapters that captures the fundamental assertion that theorizing on education is enriched by recognizing the situated, positional, relational, and participatory elements of learning. Simply put, who we are and where we are located within the social context in which we operate profoundly shapes the conceptualization of knowledge and learning. Indeed, many teachers occupy different existential spaces than their students (especially those from marginalized groups), and by failing to appreciate the situated and positional nature of knowledge and concomitantly remaining opposed to embracing relational and participatory techniques that could generate enlightenment, these educators may prevent themselves from seeing the value in transformative efforts.

This thesis seeks to offer hope and pragmatic approaches for recognizing these aspects of the learning enterprise and for seeking alternative methodologies. Overall, the goal is to promote

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progressive change so that all students receive the best education possible. By engaging in genuine self-reflective work, educators can identify the factors contributing to their own personal frameworks as well as become more aware of the political nature of teaching and the realities of the student experience. Then, they will be better positioned to intentionally and collaboratively struggle through the process of adopting epistemological and pedagogical models that ensure greater student achievement and commitment to social justice. Within this approach rests the possibility of a multitude of specific strategies and paradigms, reflecting individual perspectives, cultural realities, and political contexts and imperatives. Learning is, after all, a fluid dynamic that moves between personal and political spaces.

Thus, I wish to engage in a closer examination of the connectivity between the personal/political domains, relating this theoretical treatment to the issues generated in the various articles. This thesis is predicated on the notion of a clear dialectic – that *the political is the personal*, and that personal practice typically functions to reify larger political structures. I argue that dominant paradigms tend to be located within individual practice, with the power of ideology often normalizing this arrangement and obscuring the political processes involved. Drawing from Foucault (1980), I contend that discourse shapes and is shaped by power relations. Not only does the dominant discourse represent and reinforce the interests of the ‘power elite’ (Mills, 1956), but the framing of the issues leads to a relative silencing of alternative narratives.

To be certain, power structures do not simply operate at the abstract macro level, but rather, become imbued within daily practice. As referenced earlier, Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of ‘habitus’ speaks to the enduring and unquestioned personal dispositions that form as a result of engagement with objective social structures. Internalized and hidden attitudes allow dominant groups to affirm their own privilege, without even recognizing the existence of these ideological

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conditions. Ideology is indeed most powerful when its causes and effects are masked, and these power dynamics function in multiple contexts.

The articles in this thesis speak to these issues. Chapters 2 and 3 address the notion of ideological control within pedagogical tradition and practice. Whether through assuming that our cultural perspectives represent a natural state of affairs or by minimizing the centrality of affective elements and relationships in the learning process, teachers often operate within milieus that remain hostile to disparate voices and thus uphold the values and interests of institutional structures. The concept of pedagogical assumptiveness outlined in Chapter 2 refers to both the unexamined habits and beliefs that become treated as normative as well as the institutional arrangements that naturalize these approaches. In the end, students outside the mainstream become disadvantaged. A typology for identifying the level of assumptiveness and the factors that maintain its existence is provided.

Chapter 3 argues that, in contrast with common belief, the reasons for low performance among many students often emerge more from affective factors rather than presumed cognitive deficiencies. Without consciously interrogating their belief systems and the operative epistemological paradigms in schools, teachers will continue to mislabel and miseducate students. The implications for teaching training programs are significant.

The next four chapters explore specific issues in theory, pedagogy, and practice. The focus of Chapter 4 on the framing of sexual orientation attests to the way in which popular (mis)conceptualizations function to inhibit full understanding of an oppressed group. The default mode of heteronormative hegemony results in educational treatment that reinforces the subjugation of this population. In Chapters 5 and 6, the discussion examines how the realm of popular culture and the foregrounding of students' personal experience in academic discourse are

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often derogated as lacking in scholarly validity, despite empirical evidence to the contrary. Chapter 7 identifies the discontinuities in perceptions between the expectations of pre-service teachers and their schooling experiences, concluding that dominant paradigms persist in harming emerging teachers and the educational enterprise in general.

This thesis has the central goal of promoting pedagogical, epistemological, and pragmatic change within educational domains. It is argued here for an understanding of *the personal as the political*. Drawing from the thematic focus of conscious practice, I suggest that the careful and intentional interrogation of one's own philosophical frameworks can lead to awareness of the patterns within individuals and institutions that conspire against progressive thought and action. In the end, this personal journey constitutes a highly political act of agency, both through potentially generating a counter-hegemonic ideology as well as developing transformative practices.

In his discussion of 'phronesis,' Flyvbjerg (2001) advocates that social scientists reject any desire to emulate the perspective of the natural sciences since human behavior cannot be reduced to the kinds of deterministic and positivist models found in the natural sciences. Instead, the focus ought to be on utilizing our intellectual traditions in the pursuit of understanding the relationships between values and power. As a result, social scientists can assist in the production of frameworks for meaningful social change. Educators who embrace this concept are able and willing to use the personal as the political. I wish to advance the notion of 'intentional proactivism' to capture the essence of an approach that requires individuals to proactively interrogate themselves and their operative milieu in the face of ideological forces that work against this very political act.

Flyvbjerg's call resonates throughout this thesis, guided in some ways by his inquiry paradigm:

1. Where are we going?
2. Who gains and who loses? How?
3. Is it desirable?
4. What should be done?

The ability to effectively answer Flyvbjerg's questions requires that one must begin at the personal level. In order to understand where 'we' are going and how this pathway affects people, individuals need to examine their own practices as well as their interrelationships with their institutions. Discussions of possible future directions also have to be located originally within personal space, to ascertain the role that individuals can and must play in the process. Thus, the theoretical notion of positionality (Tetreault, 1993) is prominently featured in many of the articles.

Intentional proactivism and phronesis are present throughout the thesis, with personal work being viewed as the catalyst for political change. In Chapters 2 and 3, educators are encouraged to investigate the impact of their own positionality in order to embrace a relationship-based, collaborative pedagogy. Both chapters offer a series of examples that highlight the benefits of an enlightened approach and provide educators with practical tools for the classroom. The subsequent chapter delivers empirical evidence to support the efficacy of a specific lesson plan that embraces the main themes of the thesis.

This theme of framing knowledge as positional and relational continues in Chapter 4, with the creation of 'relational orientation' as an appropriate theoretical model to replace 'sexual orientation.' This term is designed to promote better understanding and more inclusive attitudes. This construct intentionally subverts dominant perspectives and foregrounds the internal and external politics of identity as a relational phenomenon. It is argued that this innovative

paradigm can serve as part of the call for educators to more carefully examine the ways in which they address the intersections of identity and oppression in their work as well as how institutions may be able to encourage greater appreciation of diversity.

Chapter 5 offers a concrete curricular example of how to successfully build from the personal to effectuate higher levels of learning. The concurrent factors of an ‘outsider’ teaching popular culture and the use of autoethnography coalesce in Chapter 6. This article encourages educators to be reflective practitioners and to foreground their identities in their teaching and scholarly endeavors. Through an autoethnographic account of a recent course on hip-hop culture, I contend that, by being challenged to think carefully about positionality and epistemology precisely due to the status as ‘outsider-within,’ this experience can be seen as a model for advancing pedagogical practice. Furthermore, the chapter explores the value of bringing issues of interest to students into the classroom.

In the final chapter, co-author Professor Rajendra Chetty and I examine the benefits of incorporating the principles of strategic development in reforming teacher education. The article is intended to blend many of the key concepts covered in this thesis. While the discussion and data come from the South African context, it is argued that the foundational issues are germane for most countries. Indeed, in South Africa, teacher education programs are failing to produce adequate numbers of educators who are fully trained in progressive methodologies that can effectively educate a multiracial society. First, we identify the reasons for resistance among educators to engage in reflective practice and the institutional factors that constrain this important endeavor (the political is the personal), we draw from empirical research to call for the development of practices that better respond to the needs of students by providing more holistic

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training that addresses the philosophical and political implications of teaching (the personal as the political).

Ultimately, as Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) suggest, social justice education is both a process and a goal. They write, “The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure” (p. 5). Indeed, as progressive educators endeavor to implement approaches that lead to inclusion and social change, the very process utilized in this pedagogical struggle embodies its principles and allows us to model the behavior that encourages students to lead ethical lives committed to equality. Through progressive work at the personal, theoretical, pedagogical, and institutional levels, this thesis is designed to reflect the process and goal of true social justice work.

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CHAPTER TWO

Bringing 'Pedagogical Assumptiveness' to the Surface: Establishing the Context for Innovation in Teaching *

* Greenfield, D. (2007). Bringing pedagogical assumptiveness to the surface: Establishing the context for innovation in teaching. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* (in press).

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that despite increased attention to matters of diversity, educators are not always fully aware of the more hidden cultural assumptions they bring to the classroom that profoundly impact their operative epistemological and pedagogical frameworks. The potential disparity between our worldviews and those experienced by our students -- combined with the ideological forces that naturalize aspects of the institutional perspective and thus leave them unexamined -- can function to erect barriers to student performance. Drawing largely from personal experience, I introduce the concept of 'pedagogical assumptiveness' to explain the situation and present a theoretical framework that examines the mechanisms involved in perpetuating the problem. Finally, practical suggestions are offered to help educators internalize a more sophisticated paradigm for the classroom. The words of one lecturer interviewed for this project capture the salience of pedagogical assumptiveness and its effects on the teaching and learning process:

Sometimes I would be talking about subject matter in class, and I didn't even realize that they were working through an entirely different set of issues. It took me a while to realize they weren't stupid, but rather, that I had been assuming that they saw and processed information the same way I did. When I wasn't aware of it, I know that students suffered.

2.1 Introduction

During a sabbatical in South Africa, I encountered a disconcerting phenomenon that served as the impetus for a significant shift in my teaching. Since most people in my social network did not own cars, I frequently ended up providing rides around town and enjoyed these opportunities to share experiences and discover cultural differences. It became common practice for visitors who found some food item lying around in the car to start consuming it without saying a word. In one instance, at a private function in the township organized in my honor, a young man I had not even met began eating some meat from my plate.

I must admit that I initially found myself frustrated by this behavior. Simply put, my middle-class American upbringing had socialized me to privilege individual rights and to operate under the presumption of a mythical truism about the fundamental and universal principle of respect for private property. I clearly knew better than to fall into this ethnocentric trap -- but I became a victim of my emotions and even justified my reaction by believing that others just *had* to know that they ought to ask first before taking something.

I mentioned the situation to a South African student with whom I had developed a strong relationship. After a hearty laugh, he expressed that, in his culture, “everything is shared... what’s mine is yours and what’s yours is mine.” In contrast with Western individualism, the dominant framework of ‘ubuntu’ (loosely defined as ‘community’) leads members of the Xhosa tribal culture to embrace a sense of collective kinship. These ideals of social responsibility and reciprocity not only command a central place in the culture as a reflection of shared values, but also serve as a mechanism for survival. Indeed, no word for ‘stranger’ even exists in any of the indigenous languages, symbolically prompting individuals to avoid seeing others as outsiders.

Thus, while I had essentially defined the behavior as 'rude,' my reaction would have intrinsically embodied rudeness to the community. Furthermore, I had been ignorant of the reality that their conduct signaled a degree of acceptance of me within the culture. Thus, despite cognitively possessing cultural awareness, affective factors initially served as a barrier to learning. Even though my students were 10,000 miles away, I began to more fully appreciate the emotional challenges they experienced in my classes when confronting their own biases or facing critiques of their worldviews.

Without the insight provided by the South African student, I may have continued to internalize an assumption of a universal belief system, and therefore, function under a naturalized sense of cultural superiority. Simply put, we see the world from unique perspectives, but we may not always be fully aware of the process or the outcome. This experience prompted me to more carefully consider the kinds of hidden but powerful cultural assumptions operating in my work with students as well as their potential impact on student learning.

2.2 The concept of 'pedagogical assumptiveness'

Through numerous workshops, extensive research, and daily interactions with students of various backgrounds, I have become cognizant of a wide range of cultural characteristics and practices. By appreciating more 'concrete' matters of culture, I have endeavored to develop meaningful and respectful strategies that represent culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). Yet, in my view, powerful beliefs that operate below the surface must be exposed and interrogated in terms of their influence on our epistemological and pedagogical approaches.

As an example, one colleague from Egypt has shared with me how students of Middle Eastern descent typically compose papers using more circular reasoning. The values guiding this

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behavior are revealed in Fadiman's (1997) discussion of similar practices within the Hmong culture:

The Hmong have a phrase, *hais cuaj txub kaum txub*, which means 'to speak of all kinds of things.' It is often used at the beginning of an oral narrative as a way of reminding the listeners that the world is full of things that may not seem to be connected but actually are; that no event occurs in isolation; that you can miss a lot by sticking to the point; and that the storyteller is likely to be long-winded (p. 13).

While not inherently flawed, this cultural approach inevitably leads to lower marks because it conflicts with the expectation of linearity in Western academic writing. Many teachers are convinced that the students have no clear point or lack basic organizational skills, and without ever questioning this belief system, their reaction is seen as normative and universally supported.

Just as a fish does not know that it is wet until being out of the water, many elements of culture are typically invisible to us. The ways of being in the hegemonic mainstream culture are socially privileged, yet are perceived and lived as naturally appropriate. As Delpit (1995) points out, with the majority of the teaching corps in this country being White, these educators may not always feel compelled to carefully interrogate their identities and may unintentionally attribute negative qualities to students from divergent cultural backgrounds.

My main contention here is that, regardless of the specific philosophical stance, all educators operate under self-designed frameworks embodying their view of what education is and how it is best done. These paradigms reflect a set of assumptions that embody our own cultural belief systems and often reflect hegemonic institutional values. For the purposes of this paper, I expand the concept of 'culture' to include all social affiliations that shape our identities and may lead to divergent interpretations of reality from students – thus incorporating variables such as age and status in addition to ethnic/national groups.

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Yet, 'pedagogical assumptiveness' represents not only the presumed rationality of the principles that fundamentally guide our work, but also the existence of ideological constructs that naturalize these arrangements to educators. As Foucault asserts (1980), the ability of dominant groups to control discursive arrangements creates a silencing of alternative narratives. With the ideological nature of this phenomenon obscured, educators presume the inherent superiority of their perspective and exacerbate the problem by stigmatizing students who fail to conform.

Ultimately, pedagogical assumptiveness engenders adherence to habits and practices that may produce emotional and cognitive alienation for students, particularly among marginalized populations. Thus, the goal of this piece is to highlight the need for instructors to examine their positions as well as the student perspective, in the hope of creating more unified and healthier learning environments. This discussion of the problematic nature of pedagogical assumptiveness is not intended to suggest that teachers must inevitably accommodate to all student needs or abandon their philosophies if students have divergent interpretations. Rather, I simply suggest that recognition of this assumptiveness, followed by a more public and collaborative conversation with our peers and our students, might prove beneficial in enhancing the teaching and learning process. In the alternative, instructors will continue to operate in ways that may unintentionally disadvantage certain groups of students.

Rather than merely blaming teachers who lack this understanding, it is instructive to explore the reasons why some educators avoid this self-reflective work. By seeking plausible causes, we can more meaningfully endeavor to ultimately provide an appropriate context for encouraging greater consciousness. Building from Brookfield's (1995) discussion of the barriers to reflective practice, I identify and label three factors in this process. The first, cultural *inhabitation*, refers to the central theme of this paper – that assimilation into our own cultural

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milieus leads us to follow operative frameworks that become seen as normative. Compounding the problem is the notion of the privatization of teaching, by which educators occupy their own solitary spaces that elude or even intentionally evade opportunities for critique (Parker, 1993). Parker contends that while most other professionals constantly face scrutiny and utilize observation for growth,

Professors conduct their practice as teachers in private. We walk into the classroom and close the door figuratively and literally on the daunting task of teaching. When we emerge, we rarely talk with each other about what we have done, or need to do (p. 8).

An additional explanation would be the dynamic of personal *inhibition*, a condition characterized by concerns over the possible negative emotional consequences of engaging in critical self-examination. For example, I suggest that some educators fail to attend professional development offerings partly out of fear of feeling vulnerable or being exposed as a weak teacher. It is emotionally safe to maintain an authoritative stance in the classroom and assume that we know exactly what we are doing. Many teachers have become accustomed their styles, and without previous exposure to more innovative techniques, many not be confident or comfortable with the process and its possible emotional effects. Others may indeed have a desire to improve their skills yet hesitate due to concerns over being labeled negatively as a result of pursuing non-traditional paths. Thus, many educators might not simply be hostile to the concept, but rather, need appropriate support and encouragement.

The notion of institutional *inhibitory* practices represents the third plausible factor. Many educators work tremendously long hours and struggle to find the time and energy for self-reflection. Without institutional support or rewards for pursuing these endeavors, it becomes less likely that teachers will be sufficiently motivated to adopt new approaches. In the end, it is hoped that this paper can serve as the impetus for educators to consider the value of this

endeavor and for administrators to develop appropriate strategies for nurturing this growth among teachers.

2.3 A typology of understanding

To assist educators in assessing the existence of pedagogical assumptiveness, I present a heuristic model that addresses its dimensions. I contend that awareness and experience constitute the two critical variables in recognizing and potentially dismantling assumptiveness. In the proposed framework, the variable of awareness represents the degree to which educators have interrogated their own epistemological stance as well as appreciated the potential disparity between their perspectives and those of students. Moving beyond a simple 'yes/no' binary to indicate the presence or absence of awareness, I utilize the category of 'resistant' to represent educators unwilling to even consider the value of this process due to being immersed in a positivist paradigm.

Drawing from the symbolic interactionist tradition, I suggest that true self-consciousness requires both awareness and social experience. In this case, 'experience' is defined by relatively recent, concrete opportunities in which the individual gains personal insight into the student context. Through interaction, the individual becomes able to more fully 'take the role of the other' and thus establish the context for understanding the divergent realities faced by various social actors (Mead, 1934). I contend that social encounters are also necessary for individuals to obtain feedback and awareness of matters that they may be unable or unwilling to recognize during self-reflection. Thus, these experiences not only can deepen insights but also generate greater emotional commitment to tackling critical issues for change.

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Educators with both awareness and experience would be considered to have formulated an *internalized consciousness*. In addition to possessing intellectual cognizance of the student reality, their direct encounters generate an affective response that solidifies their understanding and commitment to creating a healthy classroom environment. The condition of awareness without direct experience can be classified as *emergent consciousness*, in which educators have an appreciation of the issues but an insufficient range of encounters that may move them to heightened understanding and commitment.

I suggest that a lack of awareness but the presence of direct experience would be categorized as *latent consciousness*. With effective prompting, these educators can be guided to obtain requisite awareness. Individuals lacking in both awareness and experience would represent a state of *dysconsciousness*, building from King's (1991) definition of dysconscious racism as the tacit acceptance of dominant standards as normative. While perhaps not intentionally oppressive, these belief systems support the perpetuation of a hegemonic condition by disallowing even the possibility of the need to consider alternative arrangements. To effectively emerge from this condition, concrete experiences as the 'other' might be needed.

The most troubling conditions come from individuals who remain intentionally resistant to acknowledging the existence of pedagogical assumptiveness and the benefits of addressing its impact on teaching and learning processes. Yet, without direct experience, those educators in this *anti-consciousness* category still have the potential for gaining insights from encounters that could generate an existential wake-up call. Those individuals with the relevant experiences who still remain resistant can be classified as possessing the most entrenched form of *oppositional consciousness*.

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Overall, it is hoped that educators and administrators can find utility in this framework, especially in effectively assessing the needs of instructors and subsequently providing a meaningful context for promoting change. I argue for an understanding of the reasons for certain patterns, drawing in part from the developmental model offered by Fuller (1969) that evaluates how teacher concerns and identities shift as they transition from being novices to veterans in the classroom. Empirical data are needed to ascertain salient correlational patterns between stages of teacher development and placement in certain categories in my model.

Figure 1: A conceptual model for understanding the salience of pedagogical assumptiveness

		Awareness		
		Yes	No	Resistant
Experience	Yes	Internalized consciousness	Latent Consciousness	Oppositional consciousness
	No	Emergent consciousness	Dysconsciousness	Anti-consciousness

2.4 Generating generational awareness

To encourage enhanced awareness, this section will more closely examine the characteristics of today's student population and the disparities between their expectations and the worldviews espoused by many educators. By representing a wider cross-section of the country, today's students differ significantly from the young people populating the campuses in previous generations (Morrison, 2003). But rather than bemoaning this societal development, we can celebrate the increasing diversity as a testament to increasing opportunities and a vehicle for

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enriching our classroom discussions.

While research demonstrates that most professors teach the way they were taught years ago, these typically lecture-centered approaches have limited utility in the contemporary classroom (Gardiner, 1998). The notion of a mono-directional, passive system of ‘banking’ (Freire, 1970) still dominates, in which teachers merely endeavor to deposit information into students without their participation. This phenomenon is especially disconcerting when considering how professors dedicated to the principles of research routinely ignore sound empirical data that consistently supports the benefits of more interactive approaches (e.g. Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Again, many teachers assume that students ought to be like they were and learn like they did (Prensky, 2001). However, the multi-tasking abilities of this new ‘millennial generation’ lead students to strongly desire the use of multiple learning modalities that encourage participation in the classroom (Levine & Cureton, 1998). As opposed to the perpetual deference to traditional pen-and-paper assessment formats, newer techniques such as collaborative exams or problem-based learning can offer students more authentic ways to demonstrate competence (Gibbs, 1999).

I have personally witnessed ‘old school’ professors report considerable excitement after finally jumping on the technological bandwagon to introduce elements into their teaching such as asynchronous learning networks that enhanced student performance with less time and effort. Interestingly enough, the devices that many older educators express anxiety about with regards to incorporating technology into their teaching would not even be defined as ‘technology’ by the millennials, as these items have become routinized in the course of their daily lives. As Mask (2003: 1) writes, “Because of their aptitude for technology and ability to communicate,

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Millennials are smarter than the Baby Boomers and the Gen-Xers; educators will have to catch up.”

Young people in our classrooms also generally have a deep desire to form meaningful relationships with their professors (Wilson, 2004). Reflecting the principles of an oft-cited quote that “students don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care,” research consistently finds the centrality of connections as a precursor to intellectual engagement, a finding particularly salient for students of color (Hurtado et al., 2000). As Hoffman (2000) and Maher (2005) have found, emotions precede or accompany cognitive functioning and become utilized as vehicles for interpreting and responding to issues.

Thus, when typically framing learning as solely a cognitive process, educators ignore the reality that both our desire to learn and the mechanisms by which we apprehend material often result from socio-emotional factors (Greenfield, 2005). Since cognitive and affective elements are inextricably linked, self-reflective work needs to appreciate these connections. When students feel as if their teachers truly desire to understand their reality, they become more engaged and invested in the process. When teachers incorporate student needs into their curriculum, they enhance the quality of their work and the likelihood of students achieving success.

It is valuable for educators to consider the assumptions about elements of the growing population of first-generation college students. For example, in a discussion at a workshop addressing the issue of ‘underprivileged’ students, I challenged colleagues to avoid a limiting economic focus that views poverty as purely a disadvantage. I asserted that I could be considered ‘underprivileged’ due to a middle-class upbringing that failed to properly socialize me for experiences outside the mainstream, especially since many of my students report

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appreciating the vast repertoire of meaningful skills gained as a result of growing up in 'bad' neighborhoods.

Milliron (2004) aptly describes the disconnect between the majority and minority group experience in academia with the metaphor of natives and immigrants. Many of our first-generation college students are similar to the new immigrant who lacks full understanding of the dominant culture's norms and must expend considerable effort to fit in. While in South Africa, I conducted workshops for lecturers in which I presented a 'Township Test,' designed to remind participants that their students have analogous feelings of discomfort, fear and bewilderment about accessing higher education institutions as they would if dropped in the middle of the city's urban ghettos. One quick question highlighted these different worlds: "Do you wear a seatbelt in the township?" While mainstream culture demands this action (and even sanctions deviants with a ticket), the township resident knows better than to wear one, since carjackers presume that a driver reaching for the seatbelt might actually be grabbing a gun – and thus, the carjackers would shoot first.

I can empathize to some degree with these 'immigrants' due to my discomfort with recent technological advances, especially in comparison with my eager eleven-year-old nephew who easily welcomes and masters the new devices. Similar to the alienated student, I have resisted trying to learn and utilize some new technology out of fear of 'looking stupid.' Indeed, students from underrepresented groups are often taking an incredible emotional risk by pursuing higher education. They are often confronted with their own supposed inadequacies by lacking the culturally-bound knowledge and experiences that enable many majority-group students to more seamlessly navigate our complex institutions. Even asking for help might contradict the privacy code of conduct in their home communities (Anderson, 2000) -- yet, many educators erroneously

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assume that their silence equates with academic or personal pathology.

By privileging the cultural capital required for membership in the academic arena, educators may lead students to concomitantly feel that they must abandon the habits that provide acceptance and respect in their home communities. These students would benefit from knowing that their instructors recognize the internal conflict they might be facing by accessing higher education and risking alienation from the beloved street culture. Furthermore, when both social worlds are respected and examined, the result is more engaged students who utilize their wide range of experiences for intellectual and personal benefits while preserving cultural honor.

Similarly, it took an experience in South Africa to appreciate why many of my second-language English learners hesitated to speak in class and asserted that they did not speak “good enough English” despite being quite competent. Even as I began comprehending more of the isiXhosa language, I felt terrified of communicating with first-language speakers. Despite their frequent reassurance, it took a long time before I felt that I would not offend or be embarrassed. Putting ourselves in our students’ shoes (especially by forcing ourselves to once again be a new learner in an unfamiliar situation) can go a long way in reducing dangerous assumptions.

In essence, we must endeavor to *know students* and to *know our students*. By ‘knowing’ students, I suggest that we spend time thinking about the realities faced by our learners. While some educators expend considerable energy complaining about today’s batch of students, it is clear that we will not be returning to some mythical land of yesteryear where students supposedly all worked to their full potential. As Shor (in Shor & Freire, 1987) suggests, we can benefit from becoming a student of students -- from reading about them, listening to them, talking with them:

The first researcher, then, in the classroom is the teacher who investigates his or her students. This is one basic task of the liberatory classroom, but by itself it is only preparatory because the research process must animate students to study themselves, the course texts, and their own language and reality. (pp. 9-10)

With the notion of 'knowing our students,' I refer to the desire and ability to carefully consider the unique characteristics of the individuals and the group assembled in each of our classrooms. Every student (and indeed, every class) has particular qualities and talents that deserve to be recognized. In addition to creating caring classrooms, the process of building relationships allows us to better understand students' needs and expectations so that we can create the conditions most likely to result in success for everyone.

As Nieto (1999) points out in a book chapter entitled "Who does the accommodating?" students are constantly asked to conform their ways of thinking and acting to play by our rules, while institutions and educators may not always fully consider the symbolic and pedagogical benefits of truly listening to students and being open to alternative perspectives. Due to the alienation they experience, students may engage in a form of 'anti-learning,' in which they intentionally resist the educational endeavor (Kohl, 1994). Our willingness to accommodate not only allows for new viewpoints to emerge in the classroom, but it can also serve as the impetus for students feeling more motivated to follow our lead.

2.5 Awareness through pedagogical reflection: A few cases from the classroom

To better illustrate how pedagogical assumptiveness functions in the classroom and hopefully stimulate further awareness, I turn to a series of examples from my own experiences. In one instance, a distinguished colleague asked me for suggestions in designing a workshop to help post-graduate students improve their reflective writing assignments. Complaining about their supposed inability to produce quality work, she endeavored to 'teach' ways to produce

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appropriate reflection. In her operative assumption, the students and their abilities were viewed as flawed, a stance that prevented her from discovering other substantive issues potentially affecting their performance.

I suggested that, before implementing any didactic lesson, she might engage students in a discussion about their definition of 'reflection' and to interrogate its relative value within their cultural worlds. Many students have been taught to avoid personalizing their papers. In addition, they may feel that highly self-critical pieces might make them 'look bad' and negatively affect their grade; conversely, their cultures may discourage self-aggrandizement. Through an open exploration, this lecturer could gain clearer understanding of the plausible cultural disparities, not the presumed cognitive deficiencies, that might be producing the most salient impact on their performance.

During a workshop I conducted at an international conference, a participant mentioned how she once solicited feedback by asking students to write down any questions or comments and submit them to her. When no students responded, this teacher was troubled about their supposed disinterest. Fellow attendees proceeded to share alternative explanations, such as the point that requiring students to provide names on the paper ("so that I could personally address their issues") might have served as a significant impediment.

Indeed, many students find it disconcerting to admit their own deficiencies for a host of reasons. Feedback delivered anonymously or within a group would likely be preferable. I often visit classrooms where educators ask, "Does everyone understand?" and subsequently encounter complete silence. Clearly, students have questions or points to contribute, but the discursive frame inhibits many individuals who are afraid of appearing 'stupid.' More effective questions increase the likelihood of student participation: "Who can summarize the main point of our class

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session?” or “Who wants to enrich the discussion by posing a question or offering a unique reaction to the material?”

Next, this instructor failed to fully appreciate the impact of various cultural forces. While *ostensibly celebrating multiculturalism in her teaching, she had ignored the reality that culture shapes not only what we know -- but also literally, the mechanisms by which we think and interact with one another* (Driscoll, 1994). In many societies, students are expected to sit quietly and focus exclusively on soaking up information presented by the experts (Kensaku, 2001). Speaking up is behavior considered antithetical to the definition of a good student, and I have witnessed many international students manifesting physiological discomfort the first time that I request their opinions in class. Therefore, raising concerns on paper might be seen by these students as a heretical act of dishonoring the noble educator. Collectively, we concluded that before using this kind of exercise, one might publicly acknowledge and explore the relevant cultural issues in the classroom and inform students that feedback would be interpreted as a sign of respect and a gift in the effort to grow as a teacher.

Similarly, in the early days of my career, pedagogical assumptiveness led me to negatively interpret classroom silence to my questions or my invitations to share, believing that students obviously just didn't know or care. One day, a student named Susan* brilliantly commented to me, “You've spent years studying these issues -- sometimes, we need a few seconds to think before formulating an idea worth offering!” Indeed, in my many classroom observations, I have noted that the typical teacher answers her own questions within a few seconds. Without even envisioning the need to question these belief systems, educators may view students' detachment or resistance as evidence of supposed intellectual or emotional weaknesses rather than as a reasonable response. A quick solution for me has been the adoption

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of the 'think-pair-share' technique, in which students are granted a minute to silently ponder the material, then encouraged to form dyads to briefly discuss their thoughts, and finally engaged in a larger class conversation.

A meaningful consideration of pedagogical assumptiveness also allows us to properly interrogate larger institutional practices. Drawing from the multicultural education agenda, it is essential to examine how disparate forms of knowledge are being treated in our curricula and policies. The way in which knowing is shaped, understood, and validated often varies between cultures -- yet certain social constructs are granted greater legitimacy within institutions of higher education (Code, 1991; Harding, 1991). For example, mainstream academic thought celebrates the importance of effective communication, with my school requiring students to complete courses in the Speech department in order to graduate. Being a good communicator is essentially defined as someone who speaks well, yet the implicit privileging of 'talking' over 'listening' skills runs antithetical to the ethos embraced in many Native American communities (Basso, 1970).

Thus, when we assign points based on 'class participation' or even chastise students for not contributing to conversations, we draw from a societal assumptiveness about the 'need to talk' (Cameron, 2000). These requirements could produce internal conflict among students from cultural backgrounds emphasizing different communicative traditions (Rodriguez, 1982). As someone who values and rewards participation, I have not abandoned the concept -- but I do find myself more meaningfully considering its implementation and how I explain the rationale to students. Rather than merely presuming that our objectives are good, we benefit from consciously reflecting on what we are doing, why are we doing it, and what impact our forms of doing have on students.

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Pedagogical assumptiveness creeps into so many unexamined aspects of our teaching, with some of these 'mundane' matters holding considerable importance in the eyes of students. I was reminded of the power of seemingly innocuous assumptions when I stepped to the back of the room one day in my classroom to check out my boardwork. I just figured that students could decipher the words, but quickly discovered that some individuals might struggle since the writing was sometimes too small and certain colors were not visible because of glare from the lights. Just because I could see and make sense of it from in front of the room didn't mean that they could, and I was forced to make some significant changes that inevitably enhanced student learning.

Similarly, while I provide abundant information in my assignment sheets to ensure that students have clear direction, a student recently showed me how the structure and style of the handout itself might significantly impact student comprehension. In a thoughtful paper, she offered a provocative critique of an element in my teaching that had been taken for granted:

Why does this engaging, dynamic teacher of mine have such boring, unengaging assignment handouts? The words are just words, nothing that draws you in. I've rarely even gotten the idea that it is important information on them. Nothing is highlighted or framed in a way that information is easily dispensed.

Again, it is the student's job to make sense of our assignments, but we can enhance the likelihood of stronger performance by creating handouts with visual appeal.

Our use of language often reflects matters of assumptiveness as well. As one South African engineering student suggested to me, lecturers in his department routinely make reference to machinery totally unfamiliar to young people growing up in rural areas. Knowledge of a basic concept such as a crane is taken for granted by educators -- but many students who might be cognitively capable of grasping the underlying principles are unable to process the lecture because of an unfamiliar word. Even effusive individual praise, which one might assume

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would typically function as a motivating force, runs contrary to the preferred mode of indirect or collective praise in some cultures (Au, 1980). When educators encourage students to ‘do what’s best for you,’ this belief may create internal conflict for some students whose cultures *fundamentally privilege the primacy of the family*.

Processing these issues has even prompted me to more carefully analyze how I utilize examples in the classroom. For instance, not only might students ‘hear’ the stories that I tell differently than I intend, but also, receiving a long series of examples without clear points of connection could generate greater confusion. I had just assumed that more examples translated into stronger comprehension, and now, I think more carefully about the process.

In another case that demonstrates the complexity of these issues, I recently devised an assignment in which students used sociological concepts to analyze a personal photograph. Without employing a collective conversation in the classroom, I unintentionally created a problematic situation. Since possessing photos in the home violates Muslim law, one student spent countless nights agonizing over the assignment. Fortunately, another student e-mailed to inform me of this situation. Simply by engaging students in an examination of the meanings of pictures in various cultures, I might have uncovered this valuable knowledge earlier.

In no way can lecturers possess awareness of every cultural expectation, but through the willingness to collaboratively explore rather than assume, our ability to understand is enhanced. In the midst of promoting critical thinking, students can feel free to share their perspective – in the end, creating a greater possibility for understanding and a forum for students to enlighten us as well. Rather than treat our behaviors in normative fashion and obscure the ideological backdrop, this conscious interrogation can ultimately encourage educators to develop practices that enhance the possibility for student success.

2.6 Examining self and other: The role of affective forces in student culture

As argued earlier, the significance of affective dimensions in the teaching and learning process is often underappreciated or devalued in academic culture. Whether due to epistemological traditions that consider emotional engagement a potential threat to scientific objectivity, assumptions of our roles as purely being transmitters of course content, or other explanatory elements, many educators express considerable reluctance to address emotionality in the classroom – as if ignoring the elephant in the room implies that the animal is not present.

For example, it is important to recognize how weaknesses in critical thinking may sometimes not reflect limited cognitive functioning, but rather, be indicative of the emotional fears students may experience when being challenged to consider alternate viewpoints. Whether uncomfortable about a potential loss of identity or embarrassment over discovering flaws in their perspectives, some students may resist these new intellectual encounters. Drawing an analogy from physics, matter believed to be solid is actually comprised of a host of spinning particles. Just because we are unable to see the particles does not mean they fail to exist – and thus, there are benefits to identifying the underlying kinds of emotional spinning that students often experience, even when their public persona suggests otherwise.

During a recent class, a student named Kenny persisted in displaying rigid thinking, and my attempts to ‘convince’ him of the perils of that approach led him to become even more resolute in his stance. Not only did my response elicit defensiveness, but I was also symbolically contradicting my philosophy about valuing divergent viewpoints. Kenny approached me weeks later and revealed that, as a recovering addict, the thought of permitting himself to stray from his spiritual core by accepting new ideas generated considerable anxiety about “losing my base and then letting myself do all sorts of dangerous stuff again.”

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Essentially, his response to a perceived threatening environment made sense. My assumption of Kenny as possibly an inherently closed-minded person was inaccurate, and following my apology and a discussion of our disparate perspectives, he was able to learn again *in our classroom*. As a colleague of mine asserted, “If they’re not uncomfortable, they won’t learn – but if they’re too uncomfortable, they won’t learn.” Thus, my interactions with Kenny reminded me that if students are encouraged to question their beliefs, they must not be alone in the endeavor.

In other cases, reticent students may be struggling emotionally with the material being presented, especially when they are being asked to reveal or confront personal information (Grauerholz and Copenhaver, 1994). Recognizing these potential fear and concerns can lead educators to structure activities in a more sensitive manner and perhaps first model the sharing process themselves. As hooks (1994) writes,

I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share... It is often helpful if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material (p. 21).

As professors begin to acknowledge the intellectual benefits of engaging students in meaningful personal encounters such as service-learning and encouraging them to carefully reflect on these experiences (Maher, 2003), it is valuable to recognize the risks involved. By demonstrating a similar willingness to examine our own belief systems and share them with students, we establish an environment more conducive to growth.

Furthermore, it seems that the longer we drift away from being in the student role, the more we may be drawn to forget their considerable life demands. Garner and Haugen (2005) assert that while educators are generally sensitive to major crisis-related anxieties, they often lack appreciation for the chronic stress among students that affects their daily functioning.

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While stress is a part of life, many students lack the autonomy we take for granted in remedying these problems (for example, we can often push back our deadlines) or the requisite skills to handle them successfully.

Thus, while helping students gain academic literacy, educators perform an educational and moral service by working diligently to address compelling affective issues. Noddings' (1984) suggestion that "the student is infinitely more important than the subject" seems critical in our endeavors. While many disillusioned educators criticize this perspective as sentimental anti-intellectualism, I suggest that within this 'ethic of care' (Noddings, 2002), students typically become more motivated to accept intellectual challenges (Ayers, 2001) and develop a richer appreciation for diversity in thought (Sapon-Shevin, 1999). As Meier (2002: 63) argues, these personal connections directly correlate with advanced critical thinking: "Caring is as much cognitive as it is affective. The capacity to see the world as others might is central to unsentimental compassion and at the root of both intellectual skepticism and empathy." Thus, the aim is not only a socio-emotional bond, but also a cognitive one.

Thus, these powerful relationships have both personal and epistemological value. By truly endeavoring to understand our students and their experiences, we gain insight into matters of cognition and culture. Indeed, my best 'teaching' often occurs during one-on-one conversations in the office, initially originated by providing a small amount of extra credit for setting an appointment with me to talk about any issue of interest. As I learn about my students, I can frame my comments in ways that may make more sense; as they share experiences and perspectives, I discover new insights as well. Sometimes, in the midst of this freer exchange of ideas, concepts that frustrated students for weeks become easily mastered when working in this context.

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Years ago, I learned a popular adage in the social work field: 'People treat us the way they feel about themselves.' While it is understandable to be disappointed when students act out in seemingly inappropriate ways, I have become far more willing to accept that their conduct might simply reflect a cry for attention. Of course, I have stumbled many times along the way, coming down hard on some students for turning in late or incomplete work, when I should have first opened a listening ear and an inquiring mind. The key is to move beyond assumption and strive to attain insight.

My students often complain that their professors do not get to truly know the real person beneath the student mask. Indeed, as I continue to attend school events and interact with my students in these different contexts, a whole new and multi-layered picture emerges. I discover their varied talents, I have a chance to hear their personal stories and appeals for guidance, and I make my life experiences more available and relevant to them -- with these encounters dramatically transforming my teaching and interactions with students for the better.

After taking the role of a returning university student for a full year, Nathan (2005) produced a thoughtful ethnographic account of the realities and challenges of today's students. For instance, as opposed to the prevailing assumption of students' intellectual apathy, she discovered that considerable time demands impact students' ability to attend office hours or extracurricular functions. With these profound insights impacting her understanding of students, Nathan discovered new approaches for reaching and teaching her students -- with the students ultimately voting her as the top faculty member in the year following completion of her field work.

While most professors would be understandably reluctant or unable to pursue that level of engagement, it is reasonable to suggest that we endeavor to find ways to better understand our

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students and their experiences. To accomplish that objective, I offer a valuable exercise that may assist teachers in moving in this direction. Each semester, I use an entire session in all of my courses to ask students to write down any question that they are currently pondering and believe that someone in the room can answer. I suggest to them that the question can relate to course material, school, or life in general -- and that it can be framed as factual (i.e. "How many credits do we need to graduate?"), opinion based (i.e. "How does everyone feel about legalizing same-sex marriage?"), or personal (i.e. "What should I do about my feelings that my girlfriend is cheating on me?"). After composing the anonymous question, the papers are placed in a box for me to read out loud.

For the remainder of the class session, we explore the issues together and establish a closer classroom bond while addressing very real issues that matter to the students. As suggested earlier, it is easy to forget that our students are typically juggling so many challenging life demands, and greater awareness of their experience can help us in our interactions with them and in our teaching. Furthermore, in addition to dispelling their assumptions that instructors do not care about them, the exercise allows us to connect personal experiences with course concepts -- thus promoting group cohesion and motivation as well as producing considerable intellectual growth.

2.7 Realistic challenges, practical suggestions

In addition to incorporating more innovative pedagogical approaches that engage students, I suggest that our greatest potential lies within the power of the personal example. As Mittler and Blumenthal (1997) mention in their discussion of 'teacher as text,' the way that we present our 'self' in the classroom functions as a powerful source of information for students. In

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essence, students may learn and remember far more from how the instructor conducts herself and treats them than the actual subject matter under study. Rather than finding the centrality of performative rather than cognitive aspects of our teaching to be disconcerting, I suggest that critical 'content' can be transmitted through our behavior. We can demonstrate the love of learning, the appreciation of inclusive dialogue, and for the purposes of this paper, the willingness to deconstruct the dominant narrative of the omnipotent teacher and to offer ways to critically examine one's own perspective.

One of my colleagues, Angi Caster, announces on the first day of class that she is a "white, middle-class, old, feminist broad," clearly asserting that 'her truth,' and not 'the truth,' emanates from these identities. She argues that this public framing of what Tetreault (1993) labels 'positionality' helps students understand the impact of our implicit and explicit belief systems on learning. Rather than abandoning her authority regarding the subject, she contextualizes it within her own perspective and uses it as a vehicle for achieving a richer intellectual appreciation of matters of epistemology and social constructionism.

Furthermore, by inviting students into this private space, by making herself more vulnerable, and by subsequently encouraging them to interrogate their perspectives, the symbolic gesture leads to a sense of community and increases the likelihood that students will collaborate with her in the academic enterprise. Angi opens the door for students to feel safe in exploring their identities and collectively examining the assumptions being brought to the classroom. In addition to the development of a safe space, critical thinking begins to flow more freely.

The internal reflection and public conversation around assumptions must not merely take place in the initial stages of a course, but rather, become part of ongoing individual and collective dialogues. Evidence of the benefits of this practice recently occurred in the midst of

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teaching a class on Adolescent Development. I require students to complete weekly reaction papers in which they respond to any aspect of the course from the previous week. To encourage student comfort and autonomy, I allow them to frame the discussions around cognitive or affective responses, as long as they connect their ideas with specific material addressed in class.

Despite my appreciation of affective forces, I was unaware of how my supposedly 'cognitive' encouragement to 'dig deeper' in the more theoretical papers in order to intellectually examine the sources of their belief systems had produced incredible emotional anxiety for some students. Many individuals had endured a traumatic adolescence, and my ignorance of their internal struggles kept me from providing better support as they navigated this challenging terrain. In general, we address controversial topics because we feel certain of their importance, but only after *we* feel emotionally prepared for the experience. What about our students and their level of readiness? To offer an analogy, many people seek to discuss difficulties in their relationships only after preparing themselves for the encounter, failing to take into account that their partners might not be emotionally ready to address the matter at that moment.

As a result, I have come to appreciate the value in collaboratively engaging with students in interrogating classroom assignments. In addition to generating interesting insights that often lead me to alter the task for greater pedagogical impact, the discussion ensures that my intentions are more clearly understood. Not only do many students fail to fully comprehend our explicit expectations (what does 'discuss' really mean for an essay -- summarize, analyze, critique, all of the above?), but they also typically struggle to identify the implicit assumptions being made.

For example, I have also had students who cut out major portions of a paper because they had exceeded the supposed maximum number of pages, even though I assumed they knew that I would have gladly accepted their lengthier work. Answers to this kind of question -- and the

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strategies they can employ to identify appropriate answers in the future -- emerge in these open conversations. Also, providing students with rubrics that define the instructor's expectations and rationale for assigning points in assignments can go a long way in alleviating student anxiety and assumptions about our desires. With this clear focus, students inevitably produce stronger work.

I also use the one-minute paper (Angelo & Cross, 1993) to successfully utilize the student voice for instructional benefit. In this popular exercise, instructors take the final minute in class for students to anonymously write and submit answers to two questions: "What is the most important thing that you learned today?" and "What aspect of the material is still unclear to you?" In addition to reinforcing student knowledge, instructors discover what information was not fully understood by students -- so it can be addressed again the next time. We often make incorrect assumptions about what aspects of the material students understand or perhaps why they fail to get it. The exercise can be altered to more intentionally evaluate other affective elements.

As a final example, I present Treisman's (1990) research to demonstrate the pervasive and destructive consequences of pedagogical assumptiveness as well as the benefits of an enlightened paradigm. In response to the poor performance of African-American students in calculus classes at Berkeley, Treisman surveyed math and science educators to assess their views of the problem and subsequently engaged in rigorous ethnographic exploration of students' lives. The faculty members uniformly attributed low grades to lack of preparation and poor study habits among Black undergraduates, an assumption with powerful implications for classroom instruction and curriculum design.

However, Treisman found that Black students studied as hard as their counterparts but were far less likely to work in groups outside of class. In a powerful intervention replicated in

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schools across the country, Treisman organized study groups and provided faculty mentorship -- ultimately achieving incredibly positive results. Without a similarly thoughtful analysis of our belief systems and teaching approaches, we may continue to under-educate groups of students based on pedagogies that advantage certain populations, and making matters worse, perpetuate the problem by blaming the victim and justifying our assumptions and practices.

2.8 Transforming our institutions through intentional experiences

It is clear that individual growth is less likely to become sustained or permeate an entire culture without sufficient structural influence. With the goal of creating stronger institutions that appropriately encourage cadres of teachers to evaluate their belief systems and consider novel approaches in their work with students, I wish to share a few possible mechanisms. Many colleges have created official 'centers' dedicated to the scholarship of teaching and learning, and I can personally attest to the benefits obtained through participation in these programs -- especially when the efforts are primarily directed by faculty themselves. The goal is to avoid singular workshop experiences, but rather, to infuse an appreciation of the scholarship of teaching and learning within the culture as well as promote appropriate on-going support of faculty transformation. As the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction asserts on its website, "Professional development without follow-up is educational malpractice."

My current institution has adopted the concept of 'peer coaching,' in which small groups of professors spend time observing one another, providing feedback, and stimulating discussion on pedagogy and teaching philosophy. By encouraging reflection and critical self-examination in a trusting, supportive environment, teachers are more likely to open themselves and their classrooms up to others as well as to consider alternative perspectives and approaches. Indeed, it

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is ironic that teaching often becomes an isolationist experience, and by promoting activities taking place during the school day such as collective dialogue and peer observations, institutions create an environment more conducive to collaborative exchange and growth (Garet et al., 2001). *A critical component of these endeavors is ensuring that these coaching/mentoring relationships remain as developmental rather than as evaluative mechanisms so that teachers can feel safe to engage in critique and risk-taking.*

While less than ten percent of teachers attending traditional workshops applied knowledge gained from these sessions in the classroom, 88% of those also engaging in peer coaching successfully implemented new pedagogical approaches (Joyce and Showers, 1994). Furthermore, this strategy also represents plausibly the most effective means to encourage awareness and use of technology in teaching (Norton & Gonzales, 1998). Research has shown that student achievement blossoms in classrooms where teachers engage in peer coaching (Guiney, 2001).

Administrators and faculty can also work collaboratively to identify other types of transformations that would be meaningful at their institutions in order to promote teacher development. For example, at my former college, faculty members interested in facilitating learning communities and mentoring their colleagues received partial release time for these endeavors. Requiring faculty members to occasionally enroll in a course offered in an unfamiliar field could help these educators to once again appreciate some of the challenges students face. Additional creative approaches can also be developed to encourage faculty to gain greater awareness of the student experience.

During the tenure process at my former institution, the Dean required members of our cohort to videotape themselves teaching and to critique the performance. Of course, the thought

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of viewing the tape and potentially witnessing our shortcomings created considerable anxiety. Yet in the end, not only were we able to gain affirmation from seeing successes, but the experience helped us to better appreciate the students' perspective. One colleague discovered that she physically positioned herself only on one side of the room, symbolically distancing herself from the majority of the class. Another individual developed an awareness of how students' persistent failure to comprehend assignments could be attributed to the fast pace by which he provided instructions.

In a teaching and learning seminar I conducted for new lecturers, participants used the videotape as the impetus for more closely examining the hidden value systems impacting their teaching. Learners in the course also observed a classmate and provided detailed feedback, an experience that stimulated considerable thought and consideration of new techniques. Many individuals commented that they recognized minor 'flaws' in others' performances that occur in their own teaching -- and by sensing how students might feel in those classrooms, they vowed to make important changes. After complaining about the poor quality of group projects, one lecturer discovered in her observation of a brilliant lesson about group work that she had perpetuated the problem by not preparing her students for successful functioning in the team format. When previously operating under the presumption of student laziness, she berated them constantly and considered abandoning the assignment; with the new awareness, she successfully reconfigured that section of the course for optimal gain.

2.9 Concluding thoughts

Clearly, the position outlined here has its plausible limitations and contains a series of pressing issues to resolve. Some educators may not feel comfortable discussing the elements

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defining their positionality, with members of marginalized groups (LGBT individuals, for example) potentially fearing the repercussions of such public disclosure. Through the self-reflective process, educators may desire to make significant changes to their curriculum that would require considerable effort. For example, in the past few years, I have moved away from assigning the traditional large textbook in favor of smaller texts, supplemented by more 'popular' works (novels, ethnographies, autobiographies, etc.) that interest students and help them link course material to the 'real world.' While leading to tremendous success, the shift has been quite time consuming. However, it is suggested here that, with heightened student performance and a more enjoyable experience for all, the rewards of these changes will be worth the effort.

This paper has outlined the value of exploring the unstated assumptions guiding educators in their work. It is argued that this process, coupled with a public conversation in which students articulate their perspectives and expectations, can establish a stronger foundation for greater human interconnectivity and intellectual growth. Drawing from Cummins' (1997) notion of negotiation, our interest in working in concert with students and their cultural traditions allows for the establishment of richer epistemological and pedagogical frameworks.

Without this approach, we will continue to unintentionally advantage students whose cultural values most closely align with ours, rather than achieve the ultimate goal of 'equity pedagogy' (Banks, 1996) that promotes success for all learners. Through examining our behavior and the realities experienced by students, we are positioned at a stronger vantage point from which to identify meaningful solutions to vexing instructional challenges (rather than simply blaming students for their supposed inadequacies) and to grow as professionals as well as human beings.

* All student names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

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CHAPTER THREE

**Learning is More Affective Than Cognitive:
Using the Relationship-Based, Interactive Classroom
to Promote Student Retention and Success ***

* Greenfield, D. (2005). Learning is more affective than cognitive: Using the relationship-based, interactive classroom to promote student retention and success. In E. Manalo & G. Wong-Toi (Eds.), *Communication skills in university education: The international dimension* (pp. 88-114). Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson.

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ABSTRACT

Too often, educators misinterpret the failure of students to comprehend material as evidence of lack of interest or intelligence, rather than recognizing the powerful role of the affective forces in the learning process. In particular, when experiencing fears or alienation, students' cognitive abilities are significantly compromised. Considerable research documents that students are far more likely to take intellectual risks and perform well academically when immersed in dynamic, participatory classroom environments that promote meaningful relationships. Furthermore, the role of emotions as a significant force in shaping knowledge construction is underappreciated by classroom educators. This paper provides concrete instruction for practitioners to gain a better understanding of the centrality of the affective domain in order to craft stronger pedagogical approaches. By incorporating effective and engaging communicative strategies in their teaching, instructors can produce higher levels of achievement and satisfaction for all members of the learning community.

3.1 Introduction: Bringing theory into practice

As a keynote speaker for the *Communication Skills in University Education* conference, I felt an extra sense of responsibility to deliver a presentation and a scholarly paper that embodied the central tenets of the event as well as offered new insights for participants. Reflecting upon the wide range of similar conferences that I had previously attended, I found myself struck by the frequent alienation that I experienced in sessions that failed to engage me inter- or intrapersonally or to provide me with useful information to utilize in my teaching endeavors. Ironically, even in the midst of disseminating research findings extolling the benefits of collaborative pedagogical techniques, too many presenters still conformed to academic conference protocol and adopted traditional delivery mechanisms contradicting the message.

Thus, I resolved to disrupt discursive conventions in the session and in this text as both an intentional pedagogical strategy and symbolic representation of the need for educators to look at their work in new ways. As someone who works extensively with underprepared students who deeply desire a better life, I recognize that many of our standard practices do not mesh well with their styles and needs. In my view, the ‘cultural momentum’ of academia often steers individuals in conservative directions, especially if those habits represent the ways in which the instructors themselves prefer to learn. However, in order to best fulfill our mission, it is critical to adopt approaches that meet students where they are at while simultaneously assisting them in internalizing the expectations and habits of the academic and professional arenas.

In his call for a reformed “social science that matters,” Flyvbjerg (2001) draws on Aristotelian notions to suggest that attempts in our disciplines to emulate the epistemic tradition of the natural sciences are intellectually and pragmatically misguided. Instead, he maintains that research ought to “focus on practical activity and practical knowledge in everyday situations” (p.

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134) as well as privilege the voices and experiences of individuals living within the worlds under examination. Michael Burawoy's Presidential Address at the *2004 American Sociological Association Annual Meeting* echoed and advanced these thoughts, by exhorting attendees to assume responsibility for producing and disseminating practical knowledge for the larger social good: "More than ever the world needs public sociologies that transcend the academy and engage wide audiences."

Encoded within this transformational rhetoric is the appeal for making texts more accessible, responsive, and responsible to those who might most appreciate them. Embracing the spirit of these messages, I have strived to produce a practitioner-centered work that often incorporates a non-traditional discursive manner. While some of the theoretical points within the paper have been published elsewhere, I contend that this information has not always been transmitted clearly and broadly to a general teaching public that could most benefit from its message. Furthermore, in addition to synthesizing a wide range of meaningful concepts into one cohesive narrative, I will share practical strategies for creating and sustaining a collaborative classroom conducive to student retention and success.

The argument draws heavily from insights gained from years in the classroom and self-reflective assessment of the various forces impacting on the teaching and learning processes. The paper includes personal accounts and views these stories as scholarly evidence (Collins, 2000). Thus, this paper aims to combine theory, reflection and practice in a style that hopefully meets the needs of scholars as well as teaching professionals. It is anticipated that the innovative approach will be more effective at engaging readers, assisting them in carefully evaluating their own teaching philosophies, and stimulating further dialogue about these issues.

3.2 Centrality of the affective domain in the teaching and learning process

I contend that conventional thought within scholarly circles privileges the cognitive realm as the predominant pedagogical concern. Knowledge is conceptualized in objective and rational terms (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Code, 1991), with intelligence being socially constructed as an innate property of certain individuals who possess the necessary skills for processing and understanding complex information (Howard, 1992). As a result, “popular notions frame teaching and learning as largely cognitive processes... marginalizing emotions and elevating rationality to a supreme position” (Dirkx, 2001, p. 65). By viewing students’ emotional or personal states merely as ‘baggage’ or ‘barriers’ to learning, educators fail to recognize the central role of emotions on our ways of knowing (Heron, 1992) as well as on performance in the classroom (Dwinnell & Higbee, 1989).

Furthermore, these approaches tend to reify structures of inequality by privileging the learning styles and ideas of dominant social groups (Collins, 2000). Feminist thinkers have contended that their more interpersonal approach to knowledge is not validated in the academy (Code, 1991; Ruddock, 1996), while many scholars of color assert that the more ‘emotionally repressed’ Anglo styles are at odds with cultural traditions that value expressiveness (Michaelson, 1996; Tisdell, Hanley, & Taylor, 2000). As Boud, Cohen, and Walker (1993, pp. 12-13) write, “In contemporary English-speaking society, there is a cultural bias towards the cognitive and conative aspects of learning. The development of affect is inhibited... leading to a lack of emphasis on people as whole persons.”

Simply put, a significant body of emerging research (e.g., Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997) has revealed that social and emotional variables are “integral rather than incidental to learning” (Ragozzino, Resnik, Utne-O’Brien, & Weissberg, 2003, p. 169), since “cognitive

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learning and emotional learning cannot be separated” (Shelton, 2003, p. 67). The affective domain not only has a tremendous amount of influence on our willingness to consider new perspectives and motivation to struggle through challenging concepts (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez, 1992), but as importantly, provides a foundation for tapping into other modalities of learning (Postle, 1993). Building from Goleman’s (1995) presentation of emotional intelligence, the manner in which individuals understand and attach meaning to their affective states shapes how they reason and solve problems (Lutz, 1988; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). When students learn the etiology of their feelings (Linehan, Goodstein, Nielsen, & Chiles, 1983; Norris, 2003) and self-monitor these emotional responses (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, & Haynes, 1997), they gain further insight into both their own means of processing information and the material under study.

Yet, despite the inextricable link between cognition and emotion, students are rarely exposed to opportunities in the classroom to develop their affective skills (Shelton, 2003) -- with many instructors assuming that these areas are basically relevant for developmental education (O’Shea, 2002) or first-year bridge courses (Gardner & Jewler, 2001). LaCoe (1981) has suggested that attention to these issues needs to be part of the overall institutional agenda to maximize learning for students and to create a more relevant experience. As Shelton maintains, the majority of college educators have not received sufficient instruction in social and emotional learning to properly assist students in developing their own competence. For example, while McKeachie’s (2002) *Teaching Tips* stands as arguably the most widely used text in preparing college educators, the author failed to appropriately address the centrality of affect in the learning experience. The matter of emotions is only briefly mentioned three times, mostly in the context of exploring how to ‘control’ emotional flare-ups in the classroom.

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In contrast, I propose that educators must deliberately ‘unlearn’ the messages taught throughout their educational history in order to better appreciate the role of the affective domain. I also argue that the discursive approaches adopted by educators -- as well as the ones they encourage among students -- assume tremendous significance in their efforts to establish environments where students feel comfortable taking intellectual risks, encountering and exploring divergent perspectives, and completely availing themselves of the academic enterprise.

When students feel that these concerns are not sufficiently addressed or when they encounter alienating classrooms, the motivation and ability to fulfill their learning potential often becomes significantly compromised. Just as a hungry student typically struggles to concentrate on the material, those individuals who are negatively affected by affective concerns are limited in accessing their cognitive capabilities. Conversely, when students can experience engaging and inclusive relationship-centered classrooms, they end up feeling safer in taking intellectual risks and exposing themselves to new points of view (Evertson, Emmer, & Worsham, 2003; Wang et al., 1997).

To further illustrate the salience of the affective realm in the lives of students, I offer a series of examples. The first involves a student who initially displayed a sincere interest in exploring diversity. However, a few weeks into the term, Kim (not her real name) sent me a hostile email expressing tremendous displeasure with the course. My subsequent request for a conversation was ignored. Then, following another class session, Kim confronted me at my office doorstep and, before stomping off, leveled accusations about my ‘lack of professionalism.’

On the final day of the academic quarter, Kim called me once again. While I prepared myself for yet another acerbic attack, I was pleasantly surprised when she offered a sincere apology and an explanation for her actions. Apparently, Kim’s parents raised her to believe that gay and lesbian people were ‘disgusting’ and to be avoided. In our course, she ended up in a project

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group with a lesbian student. Finding herself developing a meaningful platonic relationship with this individual, Kim panicked. If she accepted her classmate as a good person, then her parents would be wrong -- and thus, her entire foundation for knowledge and guidance would be undermined. Cognitive dissonance overwhelmed her, and riddled with anxiety, she displaced her fears and frustrations onto me.

Ultimately, Kim discovered that she could disagree with her parents without feeling significant shame or guilt. For the purposes of this paper, it is critical to note that affective/relational processes generated the possibility for intellectual change. Her emotional response constituted a way of knowing, and clearly, no lecture on 'tolerance' or scholarly research on the queer community could have produced a similar outcome. Again, rather than merely being viewed as a handicap in the learning process, both her affective state and its impact on the intellectual process became rich sources of material to gain a better insight into their roles in learning. In another case, during a workshop I conducted at an international conference, a participant remarked that she once solicited feedback from students by proposing that they write down any questions or comments and submit them to her. No one responded to the offer, and this teacher felt frustrated about the supposed disinterest. Fellow attendees proceeded to share alternative explanations to her students' conduct, such as the point that asking students to provide names on the paper ("so that I could personally address their issues") served as an impediment. Many students are uncomfortable admitting their own deficiencies, which they fear could be construed as either lack of intelligence or effort by their instructors or viewed internally as signs of weakness or inadequacy. Feedback delivered anonymously or as part of a group would have been preferable.

I recounted to this woman the story of the last days of my grandfather's life. After the doctors delivered technical information about his deteriorating health condition, they would

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always inquire, “Do you understand?” As a proud man, my grandfather politely nodded his head in affirmation -- but once the doctors left, he immediately turned to his wife for an explanation. Similarly, I often visit classrooms where educators ask, “Does anyone have any questions?” and subsequently encounter deafening silence. Clearly, students have questions or points to contribute, but the discursive frame quiets many individuals afraid of appearing ‘stupid.’ More effective questions would produce student participation: “Who can summarize the main point of our class session?” or “Who wants to enrich the discussion by posing a question or offering an original comment?”

Next, this instructor failed to fully appreciate the cultural forces at work. While ostensibly celebrating multiculturalism in her teaching, she had ignored the reality that culture shapes not only what we know -- but also literally, the mechanisms by which we think and interact with one another (Driscoll, 1994). In many societies, students are expected to sit quietly and focus exclusively on soaking up information presented by the experts (Hiep, 1999; Kensaku, 2001). The very notion of speaking up is antithetical to the definition of a ‘good student,’ and I have witnessed many international students manifesting physiological discomfort the first time that I request their opinions in class. Furthermore, raising concerns on paper might presume that the professor has performed poorly in her role, and this dishonoring of the noble educator might be deemed an act of heresy in their home communities. Collectively, we recommended that she acknowledge and explore these cultural issues in the classroom and inform students that feedback would be interpreted as a sign of respect and a gift in her efforts to grow as a teacher.

Finally, a global example perhaps best exemplifies the links between discourse, emotions and achievement. I have spent considerable time in South Africa, within a province that celebrates three official languages. However, while the college that I worked with purportedly claims to support this

policy, institutional practices demonstrate the privileged status of the two socially dominant languages and the derogation of Black tribal languages. Final examinations can be taken only in English and Afrikaans, and Afrikaans-speaking lecturers will often respond to student requests for additional examples in their native tongue. Even the institutional signage throughout campus is printed in the two hegemonic languages, with one student commenting that the only place she saw Xhosa was on a placard at the library outlining the policy on stealing.

In the minds of many Black South African students, Afrikaans symbolically represents the former apartheid regime, and this language policy strengthens their feelings of alienation. One student admitted to me, "When I hear Afrikaans in class - and never my home language -- I begin to feel rebellious." When asked what might happen if he posed a question in Zulu, another student immediately laughed at the absurdity of my question. In an unfortunate example of internalized oppression, he reported witnessing a lecturer of Zulu mother tongue reprimand a student for using their shared language in class and then threaten to summarily dismiss him from the room if electing to speak in Zulu again.

Interestingly enough, many administrators have attributed the lower performance of Black South African students to 'language issues.' Yet, they erroneously assume that students do not want to master English instead of recognizing that the cultural disrespect experienced by students may foster a kind of oppositional identity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) to the mainstream agenda. While I would not expect faculty members to quickly gain competence in other languages, it seems plausible for them to appreciate linguistic diversity to counter the prevailing colonialist ethos. Taking the brief time necessary to master a few elementary phrases could manifest a willingness on their part to establish common ground. Knowing that instructors value their culture and see the disparate languages as resources rather than problems establishes the affective connection that

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increases the likelihood for success (Finlayson & Slabbert, 1997). In addition, I would recommend that professors set aside a short block of time at the end of class for students to meet in small groups oriented around their preferred language to summarize major concepts from the session for one another -- an empowering technique that enhances learning for all students.

To Foucault (1980), discourse shapes and is shaped by larger power relationships, with the 'power elite' (Mills, 1956) able to grant prestige to certain topics and ways of speaking (Chick, 2002). Considerable ethnographic work by Fine (1991) on 'silencing' in the classroom has demonstrated the unwillingness of many urban teachers in the United States to appreciate and incorporate the perspectives of students from historically marginalized communities. Since their experiences typically diverge from the orderly educational narrative, these students are routinely informed that their ideas and feelings are not 'appropriate' for the classroom. Also, as Morgan (2002) has shown, while non-standard linguistic patterns carry tremendous identity significance for oppressed groups, they are routinely disrespected in classrooms and even cited as evidence of supposed intellectual inferiority. Yet it is precisely these resistant discourses that produce livelier discussions and enrich our understanding of the complexity of social phenomena (Mohanty, 1990), illustrate the salience of our identities as a vehicle in the construction of knowledge (Tetreault, 1993), and demonstrate inclusion and democracy in action (Parker, 2004).

Gifted educators who capitalize on these indigenous resources not only forever change the lives of marginalized students, but also produce a richer learning environment for the majority population. The communicative appreciation of multiple perspectives engenders the possibility for "transformative education" (Banks, 1996), as evidenced by the words of Rodriguez (1994): "After having been silent for so long and then finding a voice, once I found it, I realized how powerful language was. It practically saved my life. I needed to have my story told and my life validated."

One student in a recent class of mine celebrated her community college experience over a friend's year at a "fancy university," because she encountered a far more diverse range of stories and voices that expanded her understanding of the world.

Indeed, even the incorporation of storytelling in the classroom, while incredibly meaningful as a tool for connecting with students and promoting higher-level learning, often violates the traditional guidelines of academia (Lauritzen & Jaeger, 1996). Simply put, students often remember and internalize lessons from stories far better than from standard lectures, yet storytelling is not always viewed as scholarly activity. Furthermore, this dismissal of the subjective experience (Harding, 1979) limits our ability to appreciate disparate ways of knowing and functions to alienate many students (especially those outside the mainstream) who discover that their voices and realities are seen as devoid of empirical validity (Delpit, 1998).

In the end, as a sociologist, I am committed to the principle that social structure shapes individual and collective action, and I suggest that implementing substantive affective-related techniques increases the possibility of meaningful outcomes. By constructing a physical and social environment that promotes engagement and mutual respect, students become more likely to perform better and to practice these principles in their daily lives. I turn now to a more focused presentation of the essential elements of this process.

3.3 Building community

A focus on relationships ought to permeate our institutions, since students perform better when they feel valued, especially by people establishing high expectations (Tinto, 1997). Elias (2000) contends that caring relationships provide the foundation for all learning, with the building of community allowing every student to feel important and part of something special (Good &

Brophy, 1997). As a meaningful saying proclaims, “Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.” In a study of student evaluations, Teven and McCroskey (1997) report higher levels of learning from students in classes with instructors they perceive as caring. Indeed, the best predictor of student retention in the first year is the presence of a ‘significant other’ who nurtures students’ growth and holds them accountable (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). For students to care about learning, they must feel supported and encouraged to develop and use skills in the affective domain (Hawkins, 1997).

In particular, the rise in enrollment of first-generation college students worldwide necessitates the establishment of plans to acclimatize these individuals and establish our institutions as welcoming and nurturing places (Bui, 2002). While helping students gain academic literacy, educators must work diligently to address compelling affective issues. Clearly, lessons about study skills will fall on deaf ears and hearts if the learner does not feel confident and competent. Noddings’ (1984, p. 20) suggestion that “the student is infinitely more important than the subject” was further explored by Wilson (1996, p. 306), in referencing the need for educators to *proactively pursue connections with students of color*:

University courses, like public school curricula, are products of a macrosystem whose ultimate purpose is to transmit mainstream culture. For many minority students there is neither intrinsic value nor extrinsic motivation for learning the content material in university courses. As a result, for their motivation, many minority students rely heavily on the personal relationships that exist between themselves and the cultural agent who transmits the material.

By accessing higher education, students from underrepresented groups are often taking an incredible risk. They are often confronted with their own inadequacies by lacking the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) that enables many majority-group students to more seamlessly navigate our complex institutions. In addition, asking for help might contradict the private code of conduct in their home communities (Anderson, 2000). And as Steele’s (1999) research on stereotype threat

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suggests, students from marginalized populations often find themselves in classroom settings where they represent a distinct minority. Acutely aware that any erroneous comments might be attributed to their social group by classmates, these students may remain quiet to avoid the possibility of public stigmatization. Educators can concretize strategies for ensuring that these students do not feel like ‘outsiders’ and instead find themselves fully woven into the fabric of the classroom. However, a clearer appreciation for their situation is needed.

Milliron (2004) aptly describes the disconnection between the majority and minority group experience in academia with the metaphor of natives and immigrants. Many of our first-generation college students are like a new immigrant who lacks basic understanding of the dominant culture’s norms and must expend considerable effort to ‘fit in.’ It might be helpful for educators to spend time attempting to ‘walk in the shoes’ of their students to better understand the challenges and issues faced on a daily basis. While in South Africa, I conducted workshops for lecturers in which I presented a ‘Township Test,’ designed to remind participants that their students have analogous feelings of discomfort, fear and bewilderment about accessing basic needs as they would experience if dropped in the middle of the city’s urban ghettos. One quick question highlighted the different worlds: “Do you wear a seatbelt in the township?” While mainstream culture demands this action (and even subjects deviants with a ticket), the township resident knows better than to wear one, since carjackers presume that a driver reaching for the seatbelt might actually be grabbing a gun -- and thus, they shoot first.

Conversely, I was one of those ‘native’ students with parents and brothers who socialized me for success in tertiary institutions, and I always knew the rules and knew that I belonged. However, I can empathize to some degree with the ‘immigrants’ in my discomfort with recent technological advances, especially in comparison with my eager eleven-year-old nephew who easily masters new

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skills. I have resisted allowing myself to become fully immersed within this new culture out of fear of “looking stupid” and being forced to abandon old yet familiar habits. Significant numbers of first-generation college students find themselves in similar situations and need reassurance that they can handle the challenge and are not ‘sellouts.’ Returning students interviewed by Amey and Dirkx (1999) articulated many of these anxieties: “I was terrified to death of even coming to this college... the thought just scared the crap out of me.... It’s like being scared to death because you know no one.” The encouraging voices of instructors can partially assuage those concerns, with the immigrant student also benefiting greatly from access to fellow students who have successfully worked through the challenge. A student revealed to me that many of his peers concretely evaluate whether the gains outweigh the losses, and a feeling of belonging may help convince them that the emotional and financial investment in higher education is worth it.

Thus, during the opening week of every term, I utilize a variety of interactive games to begin establishing a welcoming atmosphere and bonds between students and myself. I start each class with a few minutes of ‘open time’ for students to share anything they wish, from an upcoming life event to a request for feedback regarding a personal dilemma. Sometimes, students prompt deep discussions by bringing in outside material that relates to our course. On the final class session of the week, I turn out the lights, illuminate a candle, and ask students to join me on the floor. I ask everyone to share something related to a particular theme (from feelings about the subject matter to a metaphorical symbol reflecting their personality), and as students offer themselves to one another, trust increases and the idea of being part of a ‘special’ group emerges.

Successful educators also pay careful attention to other behavioral cues that communicate powerful messages to students. Students in my classes sit in a circle, resisting the spiritual divide found in the traditional classroom and reinforcing our communal responsibility for learning. I

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recall once being informed by a department chair that fellow colleagues were disturbed that I had not returned the chairs to their 'proper place' of rows after each class session. Normative assumptions do not fade easily.

Memorizing and using our students' names can also help build stronger connections in the classroom by letting students know they are valued as individuals. In addition, student interactions improve when they know one another by name. I utilize a variety of games to compensate for my weakness in remembering names. One professor who teaches very large classes asks her students to introduce themselves into a video camera and learns all 100-plus names within a week by watching the tape.

Each day, I hold a brief personal conversation with a different student before or after class. For students feeling anonymous or unimportant, struggling silently with a multitude of personal demons, or remaining unconvinced of the relevance or utility of higher education, this affirmation is meaningful. Indeed, our students look up to us and deeply desire healthy relationships that grant them the confidence to persist in their life goals. It takes minimal effort to arrive to class a minute early or to remain afterwards for a brief moment to identify someone who would appreciate the personal touch.

On Mondays, students write anything they want to me on a notecard, from questions about material to a joke to requests for my feedback regarding personal matters, and I compose a brief response. Since I teach well over 100 students per term, it is impossible for me to directly converse with every one each week -- but these notecards operate as a valuable substitute. It may take about two hours to write something on every card, but I know that students truly appreciate this interaction. Thus, my overall agenda is to establish closeness, in part because students will often feel responsible for better performance out of a desire to please an instructor they care about.

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When students feel invested in and excited by the process, their desire to talk to one another and share ideas also increases. The act of encouraging democratic interaction allows students a richer context for learning about others and gaining support from 'people like me.' Furthermore, students may be more willing to admit gaps in knowledge and interrogate their belief systems in front of their peers than the teacher. Rather than aligning myself with the pejorative definition of 'peer pressure,' I suggest that this influence can encourage greater tolerance for ambiguity and the open-minded spirit epitomizing the academic ethos.

It might be instructive for readers to recall the meaningful benefits of participation in a special group in their own lives. Dr. Martin Luther King's eloquent statement about the link between communal involvement and behavior seems relevant to the classroom context:

There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society with a large segment of people in that society who feel that they have no stake in it, who feel that they have nothing to lose. People who have a stake in their society, protect that society; but when they don't have it, they unconsciously want to destroy it.

Within this "ethic of care" (Noddings, 2002), students typically become more motivated and willing to accept intellectual challenges (Ayers, 2001; Sapon-Shevin, 1999). Furthermore, as Meier (2002, p. 63) argues, these personal connections directly correlate with advanced critical thinking: "Caring is as much cognitive as it is affective. The capacity to see the world as others might is central to unsentimental compassion and at the root of both intellectual skepticism and empathy."

To illustrate with an example, a gay colleague of mine waited for years before 'coming out' to his students, fearing rejection in his conservative campus community. However, having developed an excellent reputation as a caring instructor, his students fully supported him following his announcement and deeply desired to understand his perspective. One student's comment in class affirms the argument that relationships produce the context for enhanced learning: "Before today, whenever the issue of same-sex marriage came up, I was always against it; but now,

"I think about you and how it might make you feel, and my view is changed." Thus, to quote Code (1991, pp. 39, 47): "The process of knowing other people requires constant learning: how to be with them, respond to them, act toward them... Emotion and intellect are mutually constitutive and sustaining, rather than oppositional forces in the construction of knowledge."

3.4 Risk-taking and the engaged learner

A few years ago I attended a workshop featuring the perspectives of students enrolled in alternative educational programs. After an outgoing young female student who had been 'pushed' out of a mainstream high school discussed her appreciation for the inclusive school she currently attended, one audience member asked her to identify the most essential quality in a teacher. She immediately replied, "It's the ability to be silly." Seeing puzzled looks, she proceeded to explain: "If you're willing to be silly, you'll make the class fun. But maybe more importantly, being silly means you have to take risks. Teachers always want us to take risks for our own good, but if they go first, we'll be more likely to follow their lead."

The learning process itself involves intrinsic risk, from being open to the possibility of 'giving up' one's current worldview to the dangers of 'looking stupid' if not comprehending the material. Indeed, one could argue that risk-related factors may be the predominant reason why many educators resist innovative pedagogies and remain wedded to the same techniques for years. Effective education inherently involves considerable risk-taking among students and instructors, yet as Palmer (1997) suggests, fear of "losing control" often constrains teachers to adopt traditional practices to minimize the possibility of appearing ineffectual. Typically, instructors dictate which risks are taken, leaving students subjected to an imbalanced and, in some cases, coercive situation (Ormer, 1992). In my workshops for teachers, I utilize a 'silly' activity that is intended to symbolize

the kind of emotional risk-taking that we require of our students. Occasionally, participants opt out of the experience, providing a valuable learning opportunity to discuss the connection to student attrition rates.

We desire students to open themselves up to our academic discipline, to question their own belief systems, to consider shifting their entire worldview by internalizing new ways of thinking and living. We ask them to share personal attitudes and beliefs with relative strangers. Yet, we would be wise to recognize the tremendous internal risks being assumed by students who accept these challenges.

If we desire a communal space of rich intellectualism, it seems essential to publicly acknowledge these concerns and provide ample opportunity to build connections. In her discussion of “engaged pedagogy” as a tool for liberatory practice, Hooks (1994, p. 21) stresses the importance of rendering ourselves vulnerable first as an educational symbolic gesture:

In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material.

With our example, students become more willing to explore their own feelings and their impact on the learning experience.

Mittler and Blumenthal (1994) provide an insightful analysis of “teacher as text,” suggesting that our ‘being’ in the classroom functions as a powerful source of information. Students may learn and remember far more about how the instructor conducts herself and treats them than the actual subject matter. For example, if a political science instructor operates within a heavily hierarchical framework, lessons about the necessity of civic engagement to protect democratic principles may be lost. Conversely, one of my young colleagues in the Math Department wears

hearing aids and openly discusses his relative deafness, allowing students the chance to discover more about disability and to appreciate their instructor's openness and ability to model how to handle adversity. His willingness to take risks and share his whole being seems to encourage them to try harder to succeed.

I recall a particularly meaningful moment when a new activity I had devised simply did not work in the classroom, despite my enthusiasm and careful planning. In the ensuing process, students 'forgave' me and expressed appreciation for establishing an environment where people could attempt to forge new intellectual ground and not feel bad for supposed 'failure.' Furthermore, through our subsequent discussion of the reasons for the activity's demise, we ended up generating an even more sophisticated understanding of the issues at hand.

Rather than finding the power of the teacher performance to be disconcerting, we can appreciate the idea that critical 'content' can be transmitted through this behavior -- such as the love of learning, the appreciation of inclusive dialogue, and the ability to successfully resolve conflict. It seems fairly obvious that most students forget the vast majority of the specific 'content' from any course within a few years, but they often clearly remember the general intellectual and personal frameworks delivered by instructors in that class. In addition, some students are intrinsically driven to achieve, but for many other young people, their motivation may originally emanate more from external sources. As one student reported in a class discussion, "If we can tell that the instructor has passion for teaching and for us, we'll want to work harder to learn in their classes." Of course, they 'should' study and produce regardless of the quality of instructor, but our presence and emotional investment matters. Studies of student evaluations demonstrate a clear correlation between perception of teacher warmth/supportiveness and subsequent student engagement (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Student quotes from an ethnographic study by Wilson (1996, pp. 312-313) regarding the student-instructor relationship clearly reflect the importance of personal connections as vehicles for learning: “In a couple of my classes I have... professors who let you see their humanness.... For them I want to learn.... Even just knowing the teachers makes me learn differently.... It makes it so much more interesting if they relate it to their life. We get to know them and they get to know us and then we learn it better.”

Yet, it is critical to proactively find ways to maintain the open door and for successfully responding to urges to close it. During a recent class, one student, Kenny (not his real name) persisted in displaying rigid dichotomous thinking, and my attempts to ‘convince’ him of the perils of that approach led him to become even more resolute in his stance. Not only did my response elicit defensiveness, but I symbolically contradicted my philosophy about valuing divergent viewpoints. I discovered that a more efficacious response is to walk students through their perspective, helping them to identify the intellectual and personal sources of their line of reasoning. By demonstrating respect for the individual, the instructor increases the likelihood the student will consider an alternative stance.

Kenny approached me weeks later, and the interaction reaffirmed the benefits of open communication. I found out that he had ‘shut down’ after feeling that I silenced him weeks earlier and did not gain much from our course during that time. Upon understanding my perspective, he began to relax -- and the learning process could begin again. As we explored further, he revealed that, as a recovering addict, permitting himself to stray from his foundation by accepting new ideas caused him to fear “losing my base and then letting myself do all sorts of dangerous stuff again.” Indeed, if students are encouraged to question their belief systems, they need to not feel ‘alone out there’ and to have the context for identifying some solid base to which they can return.

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Taking risks also may take time to happen. Early in my career, I negatively interpreted classroom silence to my questions or invitations to share, until a student brilliantly reported to me, "You've spent years studying these issues -- sometimes, we need a few seconds to think before formulating an idea worth sharing!" Even the response "I don't know" could be indicative of an individual's preference to interrogate belief systems in private and solidify thoughts before exposing them to the world. The typical teacher answers her own questions within a few seconds -- and now, I intentionally allow longer moments of silence (or even wait until subsequent class sessions) for students to work through their ideas before taking public risks. Brief moments of journaling or quick exercises that pair students up to briefly process their thoughts can help move students forward in safe ways.

Educators often complain that these concerns result in small numbers of students talking in discussions, with shy individuals who have much to contribute afraid to get involved. It is certain that, as students feel safe, they become more likely to open up -- but some classes don't always respond. When encountering this situation, a colleague distributes a slip of paper to a few of the more talkative students. These individuals hand the note to anyone else whose perspective they wish to hear and offer encouragement or a reason for selecting that individual. The recipients must speak at some point during that class and then can pass the paper to someone else who is obligated to share in the following session. A fun way to promote student participation usually results in a far more engaged and interested group of students.

A dedication to inclusion also requires the adoption of communication-related techniques functioning daily to affirm everyone's place in the academy. As an example, most test bank questions involve 'mainstream-sounding' names, and instructors can easily select a wider cultural range. Also, when referencing relationships, the heterosexual norm is reinforced by the almost

exclusive use of other-sex partners, and the culturally competent educator ensures that the gay and lesbian experience has a place in the curriculum. By rhetorically failing to model an inclusive spirit, instructors engage in 'linguistic terrorism,' with this reality especially disappointing because many students in marginalized groups turn to us to provide experiences counterbalancing the difficulties they encounter daily. Progressive educators will engage in self-reflective thought to determine how their use of language has an impact on the learning process. To develop these arguments further, I shift to a discussion of the theoretical foundations of enhancing the communal conversation in order to improve the quality of teaching.

3.5 Theoretical foundations of a relationship-based pedagogy

In the traditional classroom, the individualistic ethos prevails with tremendous ideological support (Oldfather, Bonds, & Bray, 1994). Students sit passively while the supposed sole voice of reason at the front of the room -- the lecturer -- disseminates information to be individually reproduced on some future occasion. Working together can be considered 'cheating,' even though the 'real world' demands these skills. As a colleague stated to me in his critique of group work, "they're just sharing their ignorance with one another." Most students have adopted this consciousness as well, since they almost never take notes on classmates' ideas, even in moments of sheer brilliance.

Conversely, I believe that "none of us is as smart as all of us." While I have tremendous confidence in my competence, I am also cognizant of the fact that the totality of insight possessed by the class collectively outweighs mine alone. Complete control of discourse serves the needs of instructors more than the students, and thus, the typical classroom does not establish a context for students to co-create original knowledge (Lemke, 1990). Indeed, some of the best examples and ideas

ever encountered in my classes emerged from students. They often raise novel ways of approaching the material, encourage exploration of topics instructors have never considered, and devise more ingenious and culturally meaningful ways of explaining challenging concepts (Dollman, 2004). When I relinquish control and promote engaged discourse, our intellectual progress is heightened. On the final day of class, many students thank their classmates for making valuable contributions to their learning experience, far beyond what I alone could offer.

The one-minute paper (Angelo & Cross, 1993) offers a concrete example of how to successfully utilize student voice for collective benefit. In this popular exercise, instructors take the final minute in class for students to anonymously write and submit answers to two questions: “What is the most important thing that you learned today?” and “What aspect of the material is still unclear or confusing to you?” In addition to reinforcing student knowledge, instructors can discover what information was not fully understood or internalized by students -- so it can be addressed the next time.

Research in cognitive psychology affirms the intellectual limitations of the monologic classroom, perhaps best reflected in my favorite quote, “Nobody learned to ride a bicycle only by hearing a lecture.” Volumes of data document the benefits of pedagogical strategies that engage students in the learning process (e.g., Cohen, Brody, & Sapon-Shevin, 2004), including reduced anxiety in the classroom (e.g., Kessler, Price, & Wortman, 1985) and increases in student achievement (e.g., Hagman & Hayes, 1986), enjoyment of learning (e.g., Campbell & Smith, 1997), and persistence in their studies (e.g., Light, 2001). While the bulk of classroom time is spent in lecture mode (Katz, 1996), students generate higher-level comprehension when actively engaging with the material, applying it to practical situations, and teaching it to others (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). Merely watching a group of small children play reminds us that ownership and

engagement represent the keys to motivation and subsequent cognitive development, yet the tertiary classroom is deemed by many to be 'above' that type of learning. It is unfortunate that too many students feel, as one message scribbled on the wall in a university bathroom stall I encountered stated, "School is where people learn how *not* to learn."

Cooperative learning techniques prove successful in a wide range of learning communities -- and with so many college students fearing math and science, the noticeable benefits in these disciplines (Davidson, 1990; Felder, Felder, & Dietz, 1998) have considerable value. The significance of ownership to the learning process seems intuitive, since students have a greater likelihood of being motivated to learn and of actually internalizing the concepts when they feel the material is 'theirs' and not just 'ours' (Vygotsky, 1978). As Pastoll (2002) contends in making the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, when students find inherent satisfaction and excitement in their learning experience, they become more likely to stay the course and succeed in their studies. Thus, these innovative strategies are not only more 'fun' (as if learning cannot be enjoyable), they simply work better (Kolb & Kolb, 2001).

Jensen's research (2000) revealed that the brain more easily grasps new material when encountering it through a multiplicity of formats. Indeed, with the concept of 'habituation,' Jensen demonstrated that when individuals maintain only one learning modality, their brains literally begin to shrink. Furthermore, after digesting and synthesizing complex ideas, students benefit from opportunities for developing original ideas to put into practice. Other brain-based research offers further evidence that emotions are richly connected with processes of perceiving, classifying, storing and recalling information (see Damasio, 1999).

Thus, it is critical that instructors develop approaches that emphasize cohort-based, collaborative inquiry (Barlas, 2000; Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000; Cohen & Piper, 2000). In

particular, emerging literature on problem-based learning reveals the significant intellectual gains when students collectively produce innovative solutions to real-world problems (e.g., Duch, Gron, & Allen, 2001). When students can appreciate the connection of course material to their lives and be granted the opportunity to use their own abilities for effecting change, the classroom becomes intrinsically more exciting and meaningful. As Florida (2003) suggests in his discussion of the “rise of the creative class,” the survival of modern society depends on individuals who think and behave in a creative fashion.

The pursuit of egalitarian discourse necessitates addressing subject matter that captures students' interests. While some critics may interpret that remark as abandonment of rigorous scholarship, I contend the opposite. Not only is establishing connection with our students and their experiences a moral obligation, I suggest that the ability to apply scholarly principles and concepts to contemporary issues reflects an invigorating and intellectually challenging task. For example, I have incorporated hip-hop culture into my curriculum for several years, and the academic establishment has finally recognized its validity as a matter for social inquiry and for helping students become critical consumers of their cultural worlds (Stewart, 2004).

If topics and examples emanate solely from our lived experiences, we may unintentionally function as a socio-historical barrier to students' learning; references to the 1960s do not work for many of today's students. Similarly, if we demonstrate willingness to learn about them, students are more likely to accept invitations into our enterprises. When the subjects relate to their lived experiences, students often bring the material ‘outside of the classroom’ and continue the learning process through active dialogue with others, especially with classmates they feel close to.

While one might be tempted to claim that innovative approaches cannot work in the large lecture hall, it is clear that the same relationship-based ethos can permeate the classroom and that

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interactive learning can take place (Kain, 2004). Simply by sharing more of their own experiences, informally chatting with a few students before class, or encouraging small-group discussions, instructors can reduce feelings of student anonymity and establish better rapport. With minor modifications, the suggestions contained in this paper can be implemented in most educational arenas.

By tapping into their own ingenuity, educators can develop innovative ways to bring participatory learning to the large lecture hall (Smith, 1992). In particular, one might contend that students would be particularly appreciative of their instructors' ability and willingness to incorporate inclusive strategies into this setting, since they have typically come to expect the monologic approach. As Downton (2004) suggested in his discussion of "awakening minds," the use of creativity in teaching not only allows educators to stay fresh by constantly developing new and more effective techniques, but it also models for students how to access their own creative skills.

As an example, I recently challenged myself to devise a new activity for helping students to better grasp the sociological concepts of status and role (role defined as behavior expected of a particular status or 'position' that one holds). Believing that greater insight and interest would result from personalizing the issue, I decided to ask students to think of something they felt compelled to tell an important person in their lives. For example, maybe they always wished for the opportunity to thank a cherished mentor or reveal a secret to a parent. In the exercise, students would pair up and share this information directly as if the listener were that other person, focusing on how status and role might have an impact on their feelings about the situation.

Next, the speakers imagine how the intended recipient would respond, again using status and role as guides. The listeners could then join in by expressing how they might have handled the situation on either end. While I have yet to utilize the exercise, the mere process of thinking through what I specifically want my students to know about these concepts as well as how they

might best engage with the material prompted a shift in my thinking. Although I have always clearly understood the complexity of these ideas, I came to a better appreciation of the fact that individuals may have divergent interpretation of roles associated with a particular status.

Rather than discuss the dozens of activities from my teaching to encourage collaborative learning, I will share more detailed explanation of a few ways to creatively handle certain challenges facing educators, especially in terms of dealing with controversy and adopting alternative assessment and feedback. Ideally, readers will use these ideas as the impetus for crafting their own innovative lessons that most effectively work for their disciplines and students.

3.6 Dealing with controversy

Due to their own discomfort and fears, many educators avoid raising controversial topics. I contend that we are obligated to help students work through these issues, yet a job poorly done can be more dangerous than a job not done at all. If students experience trauma, they may avoid future learning opportunities or fail to see the validity in respecting others' opinions. Before delving into challenging issues, an open and supportive atmosphere needs to be established. If students do not care about one another, they may be tempted to disengage from the discussion, or conversely, to not hesitate to be verbally aggressive when feeling provoked by opposing viewpoints.

Before initiating these conversations, I encourage students to fully understand their own positions while respecting the rights of others to hold different beliefs. This meta-analytical thinking is intended to show how one's life experiences, not 'official truth,' serve as the foundation for our perspectives. To establish the context for such exploration, students encounter readings and videotapes that demonstrate how people can logically adopt worldviews divergent from their own.

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For example, students seem to enjoy *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* (Fadiman, 1997), a book about the cultural conflict between a Hmong family and American doctors. At the beginning, most readers side with the doctors in ‘forcing’ the family to comply with the treatment plan for their seizure-ridden daughter. But, as the story unfolds, students recognize the dangers of ethnocentric thought and feel conflicted about the ‘right’ answer. This acknowledgement of their own fallibility and a subsequent tolerance for ambiguity precisely represent my goals.

When starting the course section on race, I use an activity I call the ‘Triad Writing Exercise,’ where students place themselves in intentionally diverse groups of three. Their task is to write freely any feelings they have about engaging a deep public exploration of race. I encourage them to work on the affective level for this activity but allow them autonomy over their writing. After reminding students that their fellow group members (not me) will read their ideas, I discuss the value of an honest exposition of their own issues and emotions.

Following the five minutes, students pass their papers to the next group member. After reading the ideas, each student composes a response on their classmate’s paper, providing feedback, advice or support. Essentially, three distinct conversations are occurring simultaneously. The papers are passed again and again, with the same task completed. In some cases, I stop the activity when the original authors receive their papers, but it can be meaningful to continue around another time. I always provide a few minutes for students to process the experience out loud in small groups and with the entire class.

Most students appreciate how this exercise values each voice equally and allows them to more freely share their thoughts, especially for the quieter students who sometimes fear public embarrassment. Inevitably, a few individuals discover that, despite widely disparate backgrounds, their similar feelings and realities mean that they are not alone, producing a heightened satisfaction

and interest in getting to know others' perspectives. As Hannerz (1969, p. 111) writes, "An individual's vision of reality is often a precarious thing; we can find comfort in the knowledge that it is shared by others, thus acquiring social anchoring as an objective truth."

Another activity showing the complexity of issues (appropriate for any discipline) is the 'Human Continuum Line.' I place the numbers 0 through 10 spread out over the board. Rather than the limited binary framing often taking place in discussions, the use of the continuum encourages deeper understanding. For example, in exploring the distinction between sex and gender, I tell students to envision '0' as 'traditional male' and '10' as 'traditional female,' with the group identifying characteristics associated with these dichotomous variables. Students then stand by the number on the 0-10 continuum that best corresponds to their identity and share their perspectives. In most discussions, individuals representing the polar extremes tend to speak the most -- and the 'muddy middleground' is often ignored. This exercise generates greater awareness of the complexity of issues.

When evaluating the experience, students often mention significant sociological insights such as the reality that several females 'crossed over' to the 'male side,' yet almost no males view themselves as being more 'like the females.' I pose a series of additional questions for the continuum line, such as "How do you act when hanging out with peers of the same sex?" or "Where might an older relative of yours stand?" As a result, students gain insight into historical transformations or the contextual nature of human behavior.

3.7 Assessment and feedback as processes for enhancing learning

Too often, educators view assessment as merely a strategy for determining a grade rather than a dynamic vehicle for enhancing student learning. Furthermore, exams and papers do not have to

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constitute the only mechanisms for evaluating students' progress. For example, I encourage the use of group presentations and projects. When properly supported and guided through the process, students often develop incredibly sophisticated ideas and have considerable fun. In a similar vein, I see value in using the group exam concept, especially for in-class tests, since the format helps students learn from one another. For final exams, I randomly assign students to teams of four to five and provide them with 45 minutes to prepare a 5-minute group presentation to deliver to me in private. Typically, I ask them to pretend that they are applying for a teaching position in this field and must demonstrate their general competence with the subject matter.

In most cases, the students work quite effectively together to produce higher-quality work. Through the process of exchanging ideas, students remind themselves (and teach each other) what they have learned, with the prioritizing of 'important concepts' reinforcing critical thinking skills. In concrete terms, their ability to articulate the key point of the class increases the likelihood that they will recall that information in the future.

The approach can prove effective even for multiple-choice exams, with students forced to dig deep into the material while debating answers. To discourage 'freeloading' by less-motivated individuals, students evaluate the contributions made by their peers as a portion of the grade. Although all group members ostensibly receive the same grade for the finished product, I provide students with the opportunity to write a separate 'minority report' if vehemently disagreeing with any submitted answers.

Similarly, while students complete at least one formal academic-type essay during the term, other written mechanisms keep things fresh and encourage different modes of learning. One of my colleagues advises the use of smaller-stakes creative writing assignments emphasizing student 'voice' in the first few weeks to provide early feedback for students. When communicating ideas within

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their discursive comfort zone, students tend to deliver stronger content and take greater intellectual risks.

Thus, a mini-paper on the environment written as a journal entry rather than a traditional essay still captures essential scholarly elements, but may generate more interest and dedication from students. Rather than simply summarizing the ideological positions of historical figures, students can compose speeches from these thinkers' perspectives to address issues of contemporary interest. As a final example, I have asked students to write 'letters' (e.g., to the opinion page of local newspapers, to authors, to their parents) or fictitious debates between major political/intellectual figures on subjects related to the class material. This format also establishes the context for discussing themes related to audience and presentation style.

I routinely set aside a class period before submission of the first major paper for students to engage in peer response. By reading one another's work and talking out their reactions, students gain greater insights into other ways of apprehending the material. Besides, this requirement inherently yields stronger papers, as students are unable to wait until the last minute to complete a 'final draft' and can meaningfully revise their work. Rubrics clearly delineating the expectations of an assignment and the scale for grading help students to focus their ideas. Finally, rather than providing written comments which are ignored by students only seeking their grade, I offer feedback on audiotape. Not only do I feel freer in the process, but students also seem to appreciate the personal touch and report that they do listen far more carefully to the comments. Again, I urge educators to more thoughtfully analyze their own assessment techniques to establish more exciting and revealing ways to understand what students know as well as to encourage further learning.

3.8 My favorite spirit-lifting activity

It is too easy to forget that many students struggle with challenging life circumstances and deserve to feel special. Many of my colleagues find innovative ways to reward students, from distributing to every student an individual recognition certificate to giving a coupon for pizza to the student voted as the most inspirational member of the class. My 'Cape of Good Words' activity grants students the opportunity to compliment one another, usually around the stressful midterm period. I provide each student with a blank piece of regular-sized paper, a small piece of tape, and a marker. Students tape the paper to their backs and subsequently go around to as many classmates as possible to write something positive about that individual on his/her paper. I remind students to make the comment personal and positive, being careful to not include offensive or even playful comments that could be interpreted negatively. A number of individuals keep this paper and later report to me how much the experience meant to them. The activity symbolically allows students to transgress school (and for males, perhaps even gender) norms by establishing emotional and personal considerations to have value in the classroom.

3.9 Conclusion

In a recent conversation about the fundamental premise of my argument, my Dean recounted stories about the most educational and meaningful courses he completed as an undergraduate student. He shared with me that, while teaching in disparate disciplines and with very different styles, gifted educators made it clear that they cared about their students and the work that would be done together. Indeed, it wasn't the topic itself that stood out -- but rather, the genuine interest that the professors demonstrated that captivated his interest and drew him more passionately into the

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learning process. Years later, their example (and the key information presented in the courses) still resonates profoundly in his consciousness.

While this paper primarily uses examples from the American perspective, I suggest that the essential principles are applicable to most educational contexts. The thoughtful educator will hopefully be inspired to evaluate his or her approach to determine the appropriate course of action, especially for the cultural milieu in which he or she operates.

It is my view that the caring classroom embodies our best hope not only for enhancing student achievement, but also for building a better society. When students feel and practice the principles of respect and love, when they are active, autonomous participants in their own education, and when they discover the value of inclusion and responsibility for social change, they become lifelong partners in the mission for equality. As my colleague Jim Glennon (personal communication) is fond of saying, "I don't teach history -- I teach students." By focusing on students' needs, talents, and learning styles, we can transform our classrooms and our institutions to bring out the best in our students and in ourselves.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Shifting From Sexual Orientation to Relational Orientation:

A Discursive Move with Theoretical and Pedagogical Benefits *

* Greenfield, D. (2005). The shift from sexual orientation to relational orientation: A discursive move with theoretical and pedagogical benefits. *Equity & Excellence in Education* 38(4), 309-319.

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I argue that the term 'sexual orientation' serves as a mechanism for preserving heteronormative hegemony, with the proposed concept of 'relational orientation' encouraging a richer theoretical analysis of the factors that shape identity. The relational orientation approach establishes a more holistic representation of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals by granting primacy to romantic partnering choices, as opposed to the traditional emphasis on sexual behavior alone that ultimately functions to derogate this community. Furthermore, the model invites exploration of how the dynamics of all social relationships are profoundly and divergently shaped by one's 'orientation.' By promoting greater understanding, this discursive framework offers educators a valuable epistemological and pedagogical tool that has the potential to lead to significant personal and societal transformation.

4.1 Introduction

In recent years, the field of multicultural education has broadened the scope of its analytical lens beyond the established trinity of race, class, and gender to incorporate sexuality into the curriculum (Nieto, 2004). However, I wish to problematize the current conceptualization of 'sexual orientation,' arguing that the term itself generates a limiting theoretical view that preserves heteronormative hegemony and works against the interests of social justice. The proposed model of 'relational orientation' seeks to promote a more sophisticated exploration of identity formation and to offer pragmatic benefits in the struggle for inclusion and equality.

The ideological foundation behind the proposed paradigmatic shift has multiple components. Not only can the emphasis on relational orientation better inform heterosexuals about the experiences of LGB individuals but it also serves as the impetus for self-reflective analyses of the power embedded within heterosexual privilege. Therefore, this article is framed for an audience of heterosexual teachers, especially potential allies who may have reservations about why and how to address these issues. At the same time, members of sexual minority communities can appreciate being better 'understood,' with educators from this population also benefiting from the practical classroom suggestions. I argue that the self-awareness generated through examining the impact of relationships on identity is meaningful for all readers, with enhanced understanding within and across groups plausibly leading to more inclusive attitudes. This discussion is primarily situated within the context of postsecondary education, due to the relative freedom of educators at this level to openly explore these issues.

Since many students fail to encounter thoughtful discourse on sexuality outside the classroom, pedagogical approaches need to 'make sense' and be applicable to everyday life. While scholars have introduced innovative theories in the academy, more work must be done to

transmit these enlightened ideas to students, who can then serve to positively influence the broader public. Following in the tradition of critical pedagogy that considers education an inherently political enterprise (Kincheloe, 2004), I will articulate clear mechanisms for educators wishing to purposely disrupt hegemonic patterns of conservative thought and action.

4.2 The theoretical and discursive problem with sexual orientation

Drawing from Foucault's (1980) notion of discourse as a mechanism for enforcing power relations, I assert that the contemporary mainstream framing of 'sexuality' functions to preserve heteronormative hegemony by aligning 'sexual orientation' with LGB people and focusing solely on their sexual behavior. To understand the historical development of the problem, Katz (1995) documents how the existence of a stable heterosexual identity did not emerge until well into the 20th century, in contrast with earlier definitions of a sexualized persona as evidence of "perverted appetite." Prompted by the cult of domesticity advanced during the World War II era, heterosexuality became socially constructed in opposition to homosexuality as a normative necessity that represented the erotically and morally correct. As confirmation of its legacy, one needs only to look at current legislation against same-sex marriage and other gay rights, in which anti-LGB sentiment is discursively presented as an argument about 'morality.' The failure to similarly position the desire for equality as a distinctly moral enterprise has allowed the public to equate the conservative perspective with a naturalized sense of morality (Harper, 2005).

4.2.1 Implicit Heteronormativity

Several years ago, in a team-taught class about gender, I encountered experiences that illustrated how this "ideology of heterosexual superiority infests itself in all levels of

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communicative practice” (Kitzinger, 1989: 117). First, heterosexual students assumed that analysis of sexual orientation solely meant ‘talking about gays.’ But mostly, I remember the bitter complaints about both an overemphasis on LGB issues as well as my lesbian colleague being “too close to the material to be objective.” In addition to wondering whether heterosexual instructors would ever be similarly accused, we reviewed the syllabus to discover that discussions of ‘homosexuality’ occurred on 5 out of 50 class sessions. The position of privilege led to the treatment of their identity as unmarked and normative, similar to how heterosexual students in Hegarty, Pratto, and Lemieux’s (2004) study assumed heterosexuals would feel far more uncomfortable than LGB persons to enter a bar catering to a different orientation.

Simply put, viewing sexual orientation as affecting only the ‘other’ establishes heterosexuality as the implicit model, homosexuality as deviant. Analogous to how white persons are rarely encouraged to interrogate whiteness and often regard ethnicity as belonging only to people of color (Rothenberg, 2004), the social power of heterosexuality remains obscured. As an example, Frankel (2003) found that while two-thirds of gay college students stated their sexuality on a ‘Who am I’ free-association measure, fewer than 1 in 10 heterosexual males did the same, with almost none recognizing its impact on their relationships and activities.

A few illustrations confirm the pervasiveness of heteronormativity. In a widely circulated newspaper report about two brigadier generals and a rear admiral ‘coming out’ to protest the U.S. military’s ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy, the author writes, “the men were the highest-ranking military officials to disclose their sexual orientation” (Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, 2003). In addition to equating sexual orientation with homosexuality alone (as if heterosexual generals never reveal relational status), the line reinforces the presumption of heterosexuality in American society.

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Bricknell (2000) contends that dominant ideological perspectives frame public space as heterosexual, with homosexuality restricted and relegated to the private sphere. As evidence, he offers an analysis of New Zealand media accounts of gay pride parades, in which the events were routinely presented as intentional efforts to 'invade' the public and disrupt supposedly neutral territory. This biased logic exists in objections to LGB people 'flaunting their sexuality,' neglecting how heterosexuals routinely announce their identities and openly live them without negative repercussions or accusations of pursuing a subversive agenda (Tierney, 1997).

Typical classroom practices reflect these powerful, yet hidden, structures. Debates about the supposed "causes" of homosexuality reinscribe the heteronormative position by assuming that humans are innately heterosexual until nature or nurture alters the course. In addition, role plays and case studies addressing relationships in many classes exclusively reference opposite-sex couples. To challenge the prevailing ideology, I weave in examples of people from various relational styles and hypothetically pose reverse-frame questions to promote empathy and awareness: "Do you think that being straight is just a phase you're going through?" "With the high divorce rate and all the TV reality programs trivializing marriage, do you support legislation to save marriage from being destroyed by heterosexuals?" These questions highlight the ubiquity of heteronormative thought and the problematic discursive link between sexual orientation and homosexuality alone.

Finally, it is critical to note that in the present ideological condition, LGB status is treated as the automatically transcendent aspect of the self, ignoring the complex multiplicity of human identities. This approach also fails to acknowledge the continual border crossings required of LGB people of color, who understand the unique challenges of negotiating multifaceted identities as well as the epistemological benefits of residing in interstitial spaces (Talvi, 2005).

4.2.2 Hypersexualization as an Ideology of Social Control

To compound the problem, while heterosexuals are treated as fully humanized people, LGB individuals are conceptualized solely as sexualized beings -- with the explicit emphasis on sexual activity operating as a form of derogation and marginalization. While the lesbian women interviewed by Markowe (2002) considered their identity to represent "love and emotion," the heterosexual women almost unanimously characterized lesbianism in strictly sexual terms. Indeed, the popular comment, "I don't care what they do in the bedroom," often implicitly includes the subsequent line "as long as I don't see it around me." This comment functions to affirm heterosexual privilege through their rights to public performance of romantic expression, in the midst of the problematic assumption that acceptance of the LGB community could (and should) be predicated on invisibility. An additional element of this marginalization emerges from the fact that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are rhetorically reduced to simply 'bedroom' beings.

Furthermore, exaggerated emphasis on 'sexual perversions' has been routinely used by anti-gay activists to formulate a discredited identity. Sex-related scare tactics are prominent features of homophobic arguments, with proclamations that "they want your children" (Grigg, 1998: 113). Promoting hypersexualized images of oppressed groups has historical precedence, with racist Jim Crow policies rationalized by the propagation of myths about black male sexuality (Staples, 1998). Similarly, feminist scholarship asserts how sexual objectification in the media reifies a public consciousness devaluing women's roles and abilities (Roberts & Gettman, 2004). Interestingly, males report far more comfort with lesbianism than with male homosexuality (Herek, 2002), in large part because of the eroticized objectification of these women.

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With limited exposure to LGB relationships, heterosexuals often become cognitively 'stuck' with the image of sexual conduct, and thus, unable to focus on other critical issues of identity and social power. When I mention to students that I spent the previous evening with 'a girlfriend,' the response is minimal. But to make a point, I remark, "OK, I was lying; actually, I was with my boyfriend" -- and many students admit an immediate focus on sexual activity, as the dominant status shifts from 'professor in a relationship' to 'guy who sleeps with other guys.' Young men, in particular, are preoccupied by the physical issue, with their occasional comments about 'being careful' when around gay men reinforcing reductionist sexualized stereotypes.

During a discussion I conducted in an Education course about the inclusion of *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman & Souza, 2000) on required reading lists of some elementary schools, students who supported the principles of multicultural education opposed this purported attempt to 'teach sexuality' to children. Despite the fact that the two adult women never display any overt affection with each other, these students adamantly asserted that the notion of addressing these subjects was inappropriate. Even when confronted with the idea that the majority of children's books featuring heterosexual parents (Wallis & VanEvery, 2000) would similarly constitute 'teaching sexuality,' these students refused to admit the double standard being endorsed. By sexualizing the lesbian parents and envisioning heterosexual relationships solely in familial terms, the heteronormative position is strengthened, in contrast with the demonized 'other.'

Besides greater theoretical accuracy, a move away from a strict emphasis on sexuality would reflect emerging positive trends among LGB people. Gay men of earlier generations usually recognized their identity only after engaging in sex the first time (Weinberg, 1978), while young people today typically establish LGB status before the initial physical encounter and

assert the primacy of romantic ties (Diamond, 2003). Since individuals discovering their identity prior to the first sexual experience report less internalized homophobia and greater self-worth (Dube, 2000), the adoption of a model to embrace these developments seems appropriate.

Thus, it is vital for scholars and teachers to encourage a thorough treatment of the forces that 'make' identity and the ways in which contemporary frameworks of 'sexuality' influence perceptions and attitudes. Considering that engaging in sex occupies less than 1% of our time (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994), defining one's identity solely by sexual activity is epistemologically and politically problematic -- and if sexual orientation has become equated with LGB communities alone, the use of this term is counterproductive. Certainly, one can appreciate the intent of scholars, such as Warner (2000), who advocate complete freedom regarding sexual behavior, yet this statement may lack immediate pragmatic value for members of oppressed communities who become even more stigmatized in the process. In my view, one's sexuality is a part of the larger construct of relationality -- and that the proposed shift constitutes a proactive attempt to formulate more holistic representation of LGB individuals. While some critics might presume the approach reflects assimilationist desires by identifying similarities, I simply suggest the value of finding resonance between groups while examining salient differences within and between relational categories, with these disparate patterns placed in the more meaningful context of the totality of human relationships.

4.3 The relational orientation model

Suggesting that women privilege a "partner-centered" orientation while men demonstrate a "body-centered" focus, Peplau (2001) originally initiated the dialogue about the centrality of relationships in women's sexuality. Yet, her discussion of male sexuality as recreationally

oriented embodies essentialist thinking that disregards the reality that most men ultimately seek and sustain long-term relationships (Seccombe & Warner, 2004) -- and that not all women desire them. While men might display greater sexual interest, including thinking more about sex and fantasizing more about sex with strangers (Baumeister, Catanese, & Vohs, 2001), these findings are best interpreted as a matter of scale rather than evidencing polar extremes.

The trajectory for partnering in men's and women's lives may contain somewhat divergent elements, with other intersections of identity affecting the characteristics of relationships for LGB persons, but it is critical to acknowledge that, in general, humans are looking for love. Over 90% of Americans eventually get married, and while members of previous generations sought matrimony mostly for practical benefits and to satisfy social obligations, contemporary adults also turn to the institution for emotional satisfaction (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2004). One could contend that, in addition to the laudable goal of equality, the same-sex marriage movement is fundamentally driven by a desire to strengthen partner bonds and for the larger society to witness this emphasis on relationships.

Thus, according to the 'relational orientation' model, the primary factor influencing partnering choices for *all social groups* is the desire for intimacy or life-affirming relationships. This term emphasizes a more complete account of identity, with one's approach to understanding, interacting with, and loving people -- not merely desire for sex -- constitutes the central element. I contend that when heterosexual individuals view LGB people as possessing parallel interests in intimacy, there is a greater chance of altering the ideological terrain.

In contrast with traditional discourse on sexuality, the model also seeks richer comprehension of how 'orientation' impacts the dynamics of all social relationships. Indeed, LGB individuals are far more likely to be compelled to consciously consider how their identity

affects not only romantic affiliations but also their friendships, family lives, and professional experiences (Lipkin, 2004). From the 'closeted gay man' who distances from co-workers inquiring about his personal life, to the 'heterosexual woman' who turns openly to family and friends for support during a breakup, to the 'questioning adolescent' who lacks older role models for help in handling emerging feelings, identities and experiences are richly embedded in the nexus of interpersonal connections. Thus, relational orientation speaks both to issues of romantic partnering as well as to the concomitant effects of one's status on an individual's entire social network.

Before delivering the model in classes, I distribute brief surveys to students asking them to anonymously evaluate their partnering decisions and their relative openness with friends and family. The survey also includes a series of demographic questions, including race, gender, age, and degree of being 'out.' To effectively frame the relational orientation model, I engage the class in discussions of the impact of 'sexual orientation' on these various relationships, how the other variables influence these social arrangements, and the likelihood of coming out if they were LGB. In an additional exercise, students develop a visual representation of this complex constellation of identities and behaviors, leading to meaningful conversations about relevant terminology.

4.3.1 The 'naming' dilemma: What labels should be used?

The significance of determining 'appropriate' names continues to be a source of considerable challenge and controversy within marginalized communities. For example, the popularizing of the word 'queer' in the 1980s served to unite in-group members and signal an autonomous and proactive stance against homophobia and the assimilationist posture of earlier

LGB movements (Gamson, 1996). In the more recent context, queer also represents an identity marker linking all individuals who willingly transgress dominant gender roles (Morris, 1998).

While celebrating the political and identity-forming bases of this counter-hegemonic move, I argue that queer operates to erect boundaries between this supposedly authentic entity and the 'inauthentic' other, preserving these distinctions and the subsequent social distancing as the inherent and necessary root of identity. In addition, the notion of figuratively connecting a range of different identity groups under one lexical umbrella is highly problematic, considering the significant disparities between lesbians, bisexuals of both sexes, and gay men.

For this article, I employ the categories (male or female) 'same-sex-loving' (SSL), 'other-sex-loving' (OSL), and 'both-sex-loving' (BSL). While many people of color have adopted 'same-gender-loving' as a response to the perceived Eurocentric terms of queer or LGB (Boykin, 1997), I suggest that with the fluid and socially constructed meanings of gender, sex is a preferable term. As discussed previously, other variables are meaningful modifiers and must be included, but for pragmatic purposes, the terms here will feature the gender/orientation typology.

4.3.2 Relational orientation and the dynamics of partnering

When beginning the lecture on the relational orientation model, I ask self-identified heterosexual students what they ultimately desire -- a permanent 'sex buddy' or a life partner -- with the overwhelming majority reporting seeking a life partner. While sex may certainly play a significant role in a partnership, it does not supercede the overall relationship. Again, once OSL students grasp the notion that individuals drawn to the same sex experience parallel interests, this cognitive transformation allows them to perceive common ground. Similarly, most of my

students feel repulsed by the thought of viewing or defining their parents in solely sexual terms, instead focusing on the relationships (or non-relationships, in some cases) that exist.

It should be noted that, while research documents the benefits of long-term relationships (e.g. Waite & Gallagher, 2005), this article is not intended to reinforce ideological hegemony by privileging conformity to one relational style. A wide range of relational options exists, and the model promotes understanding of the dynamics involved and the consequences for social interaction. The emphasis on relationships in the broadest context means that the diversity found within LGB communities is appropriately respected and examined, with careful consideration of the structural and cultural factors that differentially impact various identity groups.

The partnering process involves a wide array of issues that vary based on relational orientation. First, without the same opportunities to safely pursue others in public, many SSL individuals face greater initial challenges in dating, especially older single people who have more limited options (Hostetler, 2004). While on-line services have opened up prospects for meeting people, research is needed about the impact on coupling, particularly since the Internet may have contributed to a rise in anonymous, risky sexual activity among SSL/BSL men (Specter, 2005).

Furthermore, fearful of being 'outed' to significant others, many OSL youths typically start dating earlier than their SSL peers (Rissel, Grulich, deVisser, & Smith, 2003). In turn, extensive interviews have revealed that the formation of relationship-based skills for SSL individuals may be delayed, or in the case of BSL individuals, established at different levels of relational identity development (Demian, personal communication, July 6, 2005). The failure to complete developmental tasks can affect the management of intimate connections, especially for partners occupying disparate paths on the 'coming out' spectrum. While 'life stage' differences

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could impact all partnering situations, I contend that the effects may be greater within SSL communities.

Just by pursuing a serious same-sex relationship, SSLs and BSLs assume responsibility for a host of unique issues. First, partnering produces the risk of being 'out,' with the stigma leading some couples to make decisions that affect intimacy and commitment (Lipkin, 2004), such as living in separate homes. Despite some similarities in additional relational dynamics to be resolved when having children or joining a stepfamily, one's orientation may profoundly affect the ramifications of these decisions (Lynch, 2004; Tasker, 2002). Finally, research has shown that OSL couples receive far more support for their relationships from family (Kurdek, 2001).

Once negotiating these challenges, SSL and BSL individuals create relationships that embrace greater egalitarianism and involve a healthier attitude when dealing with problems than OSL couples (Gottman, Levenson, R. Swanson, C. Swanson, Tyson, & Yoshimoto, 2003; Kurdek, 2004). Liberated from heteronormative constraints regarding emotions, SSL males often practice effective communicative strategies missing in many OSL relationships. The willingness to step outside of societal boundaries might also explain higher rates of SSL interracial coupling (Barnard, 2004). As further evidence of the intersections of relationality, SSL couples granted civil unions felt greater support from their families and remained together longer than other cohabiting SSL couples (Solomon, Rothblum, & Balsam, 2004).

The model invites discussion about other critical, yet often empirically unexplored topics. For instance, a common joke in the community references how quickly female SSLs engage in cohabitation (Weinstock, 2004). With the strain of a multiple-minority status, the exhilaration of coupling might prove even more substantial than for OSL partnerships, increasing the desire to

validate oneself and the relationship. Furthermore, considerable research documents how SSL individuals are more likely to remain friends with former partners after uncoupling (Solomon et al., 2004).

4.3.3 Relational orientation and the impact on the matrix of social relationships

Clearly, one's relational orientation shapes the dynamics of all familial and friendship interconnections. As mentioned earlier, while OSL people enjoy the privilege of openly being themselves, SSL individuals must expend considerable energy determining the consequences of being 'out' and subsequently managing these relationships, especially when informing select people and remaining closeted to others. An additional source of challenge for emerging SSL and BSL individuals is the lack of available older role models to assist in negotiating identity and in making healthy decisions (Drescher, 2002). The disconnect between SSL youth and SSL adults, more strongly experienced by males, is exacerbated by a sexualized discourse (Bohan, Russell, & Montgomery, 2002) as well as the privileging of youth culture and bodies that often excludes older generations from full participation (Kimmel & Martin, 2001). Simply put, the typical OSL person has far greater access to family members and friends who can provide information and support and more emotional security in these social interactions.

4.3.4 Family considerations

Publicly proclaiming an SSL or BSL identity produces significant changes for individuals and their families (Connolly, 2004). Indeed, almost 63,000 teenagers are kicked out of their homes every year for disclosing their sexual minority status (Kallio, 2000). Drawing from a

sample of 293 LGB adolescents, those youths with parents cognizant of their orientation experienced more verbal victimization but also displayed less internalized homophobia and more confidence in the possibility of future support in the family than those fully closeted (D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2005). In an analysis of familial relational style, SSL individuals who developed secure attachment with caregivers came out earlier (Jellison & McConnell, 2003).

4.3.5 Implications of peer influences

A significant source of identity during adolescence comes from connections with peers, perhaps partially explaining why SSL young people come out to friends before family members (Maugen, Floyd, Bakeman, & Armistead, 2002). Holmes and Cahill's (2003) review of the research illustrates that SSL students (and students with SSL parents) are far more susceptible to emotional and physical violence at school, with the negative social stigma increasing the likelihood of dropping out. In a study of high school youth, Diamond and Lucas (2004) found that younger LGB participants reported smaller friendship groups than heterosexual peers as well as persistent anxiety over losing more friends or the prospects of meeting an ideal life partner.

The generalized biphobia in the larger society (Mulick & Wright, 2002) leads to a host of challenges for BSL individuals, from difficulties in building connections with those outside this identity status to being erroneously perceived as more likely to cheat on partners. Even within the SSL community, with their supposed access to heterosexual privilege and unwillingness to acknowledge their 'true' reality as gay people, BSL individuals often face dual rejection, leading to findings of lower self-esteem (Jorm, Korten, Rodgers, Jacomb, & Christensen, 2002).

When delivering classroom presentations on my model, I ask students if they believe that their orientation shapes relationships with family and friends. Despite some positive cultural

changes, most OSL individuals admit they would hide SSL status to avoid negative consequences while SSL students who speak up often share stories including both pain and acceptance. These conversations help OSL students appreciate how a privileged relational status may provide greater options for certain relationships in their lives.

The news, however, is certainly not all pessimistic. With increasing numbers of gay-themed organizations in schools and communities, SSL and BSL adolescents in some areas receive tremendous support and advocacy (Fetner & Kush, 2004), making the coming out process easier and more likely than in previous generations (Savin-Williams, 2005). SSL adolescents who do feel accepted by family and friends end up performing better academically than students living in hiding (Rivers, 1999). Interestingly, LGB young adults in Diamond and Lucas' (2004) sample claimed larger numbers of extremely close friends than OSL counterparts.

In response to an intolerant climate and/or familial rejection, SSL individuals often experience heightened affiliation with others in the same social category, with the affiliative ties operating as social life preservers that promote self-esteem (Green, 2004). Through these relationships, predicated more on identity status than sexual commonality, one can establish a sense of validation transcending that received from family members (Solomon et al., 2004).

Reflecting the need to avoid conflating male and female SSL experiences, Diamond and Dube's (2002) interviews with 15 to 24-year-olds revealed that while male and female OSL and female SSL young people report predominantly same-gender peer friendships, SSL males were immersed within mostly female social groups and felt closer bonds with best friends than OSL males. While friendships are typically altered by the presence of a new romantic interest, SSL young adults report that the sex of their BSL friends' partners has a significant impact on their relationships (Galupo, Sailer, & St. John, 2004). Also, drawing from Rich's (1980) construct of

the “lesbian continuum,” it seems that the commonalities of womanhood and gender oppression provide the foundation of a more common link among females than males across orientations.

4.3.6 Intergroup relations

The import of relationships extends beyond these parameters of internal identity, also playing a significant role in shaping how the OSL community views SSL people. Simply put, the presence of close personal ties to SSL individuals correlates with less prejudicial attitudes and greater support for gay issues (Kaiser Foundation, 2002). I recall a colleague who remained closeted for years on his conservative campus, only to ultimately receive tremendous support from students upon coming out. With teacher serving as text, he started using his presence in the classroom as an educational tool for challenging stereotypes and encouraging understanding. One student even commented to him in class, “Whenever the same-sex marriage came up, I was always against it; but now, I think about how it might make you feel, and my view is changed.”

This aspect of relationality demands considerable attention, especially in terms of envisioning new strategies for encouraging intergroup contact. Research (Herek, 2002; Steffens, 2005) has consistently found the most negative responses across the relational divide from young heterosexual males, with hostile reactions to gay men used to manifest a discursive ‘manliness’ required for acceptance in their social milieu (Gough, 2002). With a dominant consciousness imagining the feminized ‘other,’ OSL males are taught that being gay or even associating with gay men is social suicide. Indeed, schools have become sites for reproducing homophobic ideologies and practices (Sharpe, 2002), with harmful consequences not only for SSL students but also OSL youths constrained by limiting gender roles (Baker, 2001).

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During the 2003 National Football League season, a team president repeatedly shouted the word “faggot” at opposing player Johnnie Morton who had refused to acknowledge him after a game. When interviewed shortly after the story broke across the country, Morton stated, “It’s totally unacceptable. I have gay friends, and I don’t even joke around with them like that” (*Gay and Lesbian Times*, 2003). In a league with a history of homophobic rhetoric and conduct (Marchand, 2002), the bold stance supporting this community rather than ‘proving’ his heterosexuality seems quite significant. Yet again, it is important to note that his enlightened position ostensibly emerged from interpersonal connections with SSL individuals, with the ability to draw on these friendships as the motivation to defend their humanity and to speak out against intolerance.

It is plausible that this relational focus might create the context for more SSL individuals to feel safe coming out. As one lesbian student remarked, “If everyone knew how many favorite family members or cultural icons were gay, then the stereotypes would disappear and the issue would be moot.” Being out is positively correlated with tighter social network bonds and greater life satisfaction (Jordan & Deluty, 2000). Yet, relational minorities must confront the totality of connections affected by revealing this facet of identity. Badgett and Comella’s (2004) analysis offers evidence of fellow employee attitudes as a factor in coming out on the job. In my courses, students examine the impact of the environment we establish on how disparate groups of students might experience the class and as an impediment or motivator for being out. Indeed, making decisions about coming out must be refracted through a diverse set of identities and perceptions.

4.4 Intersections of identity

Nardi (2002) points out that there are 'homosexualities,' not a singular 'homosexual' experience, depending on the range of other roles individuals claim. For example, while closeted women face challenges, greater social license is granted to women to pursue same-sex intimacy. In particular, more attention needs to be paid to culture, with a transnational focus allowing us to better appreciate the contextualized definitions of sexuality (Puri, 2002).

Race continues to represent perhaps the most marked identity. As an example, in his comprehensive analysis of the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, Pinar (2001) discusses how SSL black men experience ideological attacks on all sides. Rendered invisible in the SSL mainstream, black men are castigated out of the racial community twice -- for adopting a 'bad habit' of Whites and also for not epitomizing 'real' black men willing to privilege race above all other identities (Lemelle & Battle, 2004). While members of otherwise dominant groups suffer consequences for being SSL, they typically do not experience the additional marginalization often faced by SSL people of color (Cantu, 2000) or working-class background (Barrett, 2000).

Concluding their autobiographical film, *Tongues Untied*, with the line, "Black men loving black men is *the* revolutionary act," Riggs and Hemphill (1989) show how meaningful relationships operate as a tool of resistance. By helping black male SSLs to see one another and themselves as worthy of intimacy, the statement actively resists internalized oppression and external marginalization concomitantly. Riggs and Hemphill's words epitomize the centrality of loving bonds as a viable means for empowerment -- and how identities are inextricably woven within the web of relationships.

It is also critical to acknowledge the variety of relational and identity styles found inside relational communities. For example, in response to the glorification of youthful bodies within

SSL circles, the 'bear' subculture celebrates its own publicly stigmatized hairy and obese body types, affirming identity and social value through relationships (Wright, 2001). Butch-femme styles among SSL women (Eves, 2004) and BDSM behavior (BDSM is an acronym for B&D [bondage and discipline], D&S [dominance and submission], and S&M [somasochism]) (Barker & Ritchie, 2005) are similarly best understood as more than sexual interactions alone, but rather, as particular relational formations distinguished from other coupling modalities. Also, while this article has not carefully explored transgenderism, one can recognize the major challenges encountered when these individuals seek to maintain friendships or romantic partnerships (O'Keefe & Fox, 2003).

4.5 A brief mention of additional pedagogical techniques

Educators determined to identify new strategies for including these issues throughout the curriculum will find the Internet to be a rich source of information. With limited space, I will highlight a few examples that have proven valuable for me. To illustrate heteronormative bias, students conduct a content analysis of the broadcast media, examining the images portrayed as well as calculating the percentage of SSL and BSL characters and the frequency by which various identities are discursively marked. In some classes, students work in teams to devise short scripts about a 'reverse society' in which OSLs represent the minority group. I also assign students the task of placing themselves in a setting where they are 'alone' (i.e., the only white person, SSL male, etc.) and writing about the experience. Lastly, students keep journals of their own displays of relational orientation to see its effect on private lives and public behavior.

As a final example of concrete pedagogical practice, my colleague, Darryl Brice, requires students to compose a letter to a significant person in their lives finally announcing their SSL or

BSL identity. While some heterosexual students complain that the coming-out task compromises their 'values,' Darryl focuses attention on the greater values of understanding and freedom. Through this exercise, students inevitably gain insight into the relational issues facing SSL/BSL individuals, and the valiant effort to make the classroom a transformative site is emboldened.

Simply put, I strongly believe that the notion of emphasizing relationships over sex alone and understanding how these connections might be experienced in divergent fashion based on identity group membership has theoretical and pragmatic benefits. It is harder for OSL individuals to dismiss the SSL community in pejorative ways after identifying resonant qualities. As a result, a focus on relationships can offer greater enlightenment into how one's orientation affects practice as well as the dialectical interplay between identity and structures of inequality.

4.6 Further considerations and challenges

A single set of lexical items may not capture the contours of identity addressed in this framework, as one might envision situations in which sexual and relational orientation would both be used. In the current condition, a man who maintains OSL relationships and a 'straight' public image but enjoys sporadic same-sex activity is labeled bisexual. Fearing identification as 'gay,' these 'down low' men safely access their privileged status (Boykin, 2005). Equating this individual with those feeling comparable relational interest in men and women is problematic.

In addition, it would be useful to explore the connection between the ways SSL and BSL individuals conceptualize their identity and their reactions to the model. Using Stryker's (1994) notion of identity salience, the importance of this status in self-definition could result in divergent interpretations of the role of relationality. A similar analysis could be conducted regarding perspectives on individuals occupying various stages on the 'coming out' continuum.

Finally, empirical analysis must be conducted to ultimately determine the efficacy of this model in terms of producing greater understanding of SSL and BSL individuals and the realities of OS� privilege. A sophisticated study would also incorporate a wide range of potentially intervening variables, such as political ideology, existing social networks, 'out' status, and the more traditional demographic factors of race, class, and gender. While anecdotal evidence points to its efficacy in positively reshaping attitudes in the classroom, empirical data must be collected.

4.7 Conclusion

This article has delivered a critique of dominant ideological and discursive positions regarding 'sexual orientation' by pointing to its implicitly heteronormative stance. Indeed, since framing methods significantly impact the success of social movements (Snow & Benford, 2000), I offer the alternative approach of 'relational orientation' that focuses on the totality of relationships for theoretical and pedagogical gain. As an example of the model's relevance, the words of one SSL male proclaim the centrality of relationships and the need for change:

I'm struggling when our family all gets together because while I love my family, they have the luxury of celebrating both of their worlds -- love of partner and love of family -- in the same setting. I feel like I have to divide my romantic world from my family world. But I do see a time when I will be able to combine both worlds. (Talvi, 2005, p. 19)

In terms of theoretical sophistication and practical use, the approach allows educators to more fully engage students in recognizing the impact of orientation, with the hope of reducing prejudice. Just as a car in 'drive' rolls forward even when the gas pedal is not depressed, silence or neutrality in the classroom functions as an exercise in complicity, allowing hegemonic conditions to roll forward as well. In this conservative era, 'out' teachers and allies must assume prominent roles in calling for policies to make schools safe for all students and developing

successful techniques to help students internalize inclusive attitudes (Macgillivray, 2004). It is hoped that this model can advance these efforts.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Understanding Social Structure Through Personal Experience: The Creative Use of Status and Role as Explanatory Factors *

* Greenfield, D. (2006). Understanding social structure through personal experience: The creative use of status and role as explanatory factors. *Teaching Sociology* 34(4), 404-411.

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ABSTRACT

In a society that privileges the psychological perspective, sociology instructors need a variety of techniques that can help students appreciate the benefits of the sociological imagination. It is proposed here that the use of personal experiences can be highly meaningful in this endeavor, and two specific activities are discussed in depth for implementation in the classroom. By encouraging students to make personal connections to the concept of social structure, instructors can generate greater interest and understanding of the material while offering learners the opportunity to gain practical skills for their own lives. By capitalizing on the intersection of cognitive and affective domains, this powerful and enjoyable lesson can produce a host of positive outcomes for students.

5.1 Introduction

“It’s all up to the individual!” Most sociology instructors have encountered this response from students who resist our efforts to encourage a rigorous examination of structural forces, a consequence of internalizing the dominant ideological perspective of ‘personal responsibility.’ Indeed, testifying to the centrality of this issue, a number of articles in recent issues of *Teaching Sociology* (e.g. Coghlan & Huggins, 2004; Dundes & Harlow, 2005) advance experiential learning techniques for promoting the sociological imagination. Building from this objective, I have devised a comprehensive lesson that incorporates the symbolic interactionist perspective to generate a more personal understanding of matters of social structure. This paper provides details about the activities used, the rationale for their implementation, the ethical issues involved, and the meaningful outcomes for students.

5.2 The personal and the political

Conventional thought within scholarly circles privileges the cognitive realm, typically neglecting the affective domain as a rich source for learning. By “marginalizing emotions and elevating rationality to a supreme position” (Dirkx, 2001: 65), educators fail to recognize the central role of emotions not only on performance in the classroom, but also on our entire ways of knowing (Heron, 1992). Since socio-emotional variables are “integral rather than incidental to learning” (Ragozzino, Resnik, Utne-O’Brien, & Weissberg, 2003: 169), it is critical to provide the context for students to utilize affective elements as a catalyst for stimulating enhanced motivation for learning and comprehension of the material.

Innovative pedagogical strategies such as service learning (Hattery, 2003) and autobiography (Powers, 1998) personalize the educational experience in order to help students understand course concepts and their relevance. The significance of a direct connection and

ownership of ideas seems intuitive, since students have a greater likelihood of success when the material is 'theirs' instead of just 'ours' (Vygotsky, 1978). From the sociological perspective, this approach can assist students in seeing the broader social dynamics that impact their lives (Hollander, 2000). Hollander (2005) claims that teaching women's victimization and resistance has engendered greater cognizance of systems of domination, serving as the impetus for students to assume more autonomy in their own lives and perceive greater agency in creating change. In embracing the use of personal examples in the classroom, Powers (1998: 203) asserts:

Challenging students to examine historical and structural constraints that may account for [their] experiences -- attempting to understand rather than simply tell their story -- can help move them beyond catharsis to some level of competency as critical sociologists and participant observers of the life stories they tell.

5.3 Discussion of the lesson

The lesson outlined in this paper responds to these epistemological issues and offers a novel look at the affective-cognitive link. I have offered the complete session for years while teaching at a racially diverse community college with approximately 10,000 students of a wide age range coming primarily from working-class backgrounds. Many of these students have endured challenging family dynamics and report to me that they appreciate classes offering insights that can directly benefit their lives. Having also conducted these activities separately in classes at a small liberal arts college with mostly middle- and upper-income students, I find the experiences to be valuable for students at all levels. Even though lower-level courses at both institutions tend to enroll between 30-40 students, I contend that the exercises can be effective with groups of all sizes. While a standard feature of my introductory sociology, social problems, and family classes, the session can be tailored to meet objectives in many additional courses.

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The lesson takes place in the period following the discussion of status and role. Before class begins, I solicit the assistance of four volunteers for a skit, informing these students of the focus on family addiction and allowing them to opt out if uncomfortable. Each student then selects a part to play -- alcoholic parent, hero, scapegoat, lost child, or mascot -- with the instructor performing the remaining character. While many videos poignantly depict the realities of these families, the skit represents a more 'personal' and quicker mechanism for addressing this issue -- and a lecture alone cannot fully capture the emotions involved in family addiction.

In the scene, the parent returns home after a difficult day of work to find a rambunctious environment. In addition to preparing dinner, the high school-age hero shares stories of his/her accomplishments, essentially assuming responsibility for being the parent in the hopes of 'saving the family' from its dysfunctional state. At some point, the scapegoat informs the parent about getting into a fight in school. In a rage, the parent berates this child for continued misbehavior and concludes with the hurtful line, "If only you were more like ___ (the hero), I wouldn't have to drink." The mascot continuously cracks jokes to provide comic relief. Meanwhile, cognizant of the potential dangers of involvement, the lost child remains silent. The performance typically lasts about five minutes, with the instructor determining an appropriate concluding moment.

I then ask all students to take one minute to silently process their immediate reactions. Since the scene may have clear personal connections to their lives, I prefer a private reflective mechanism for starting the analysis. In addition, I believe that by encouraging students to begin with this 'psychological' response, the subsequent illustration of the merits of a sociological exploration helps them develop greater appreciation of our discipline's power and relevance.

Next, I briefly lecture about the concept of 'family systems theory,' connecting this model with the concepts of status and role. Analogous to the tenets of the functionalist

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paradigm, the family is viewed as an interdependent social system, with each part operating to maintain the existence of the entire unit. While the individual behavior might initially seem pathological, it 'makes sense' when understood within the overall system. For example, the perfectionist behavior of the hero (status) protects the family from outside scrutiny (role), while the scapegoat provides a way for family members to dump their anger and blame. Through open discussion, we explore these statuses and the potential impact on individuals' lives as adults.

I then suggest the idea that the child may have little control over his/her status in the family, especially during initial identity formation. Clearly, the oldest child would be most likely to assume the hero position, with non-exemplary behavior generating a negative response for failure to provide a 'good example' for the siblings. With all the positive accolades bestowed upon the hero, the scapegoat utilizes negative behavior in an attempt to garner some attention. I repeatedly remind students that the emerging personality is not necessarily a clear function of the individual, but rather, of one's status -- since, for instance, the person occupying the 'lost child' position would most likely act quite differently if he/she had been the first born.

In essence, the family 'needs' the various individuals to accept particular statuses and to perform the requisite roles. Family members often apply various sanctions as mechanisms of social control in order to enforce these expectations. As an example, I mention a former student who attempted to better his life by abandoning the streets and immersing himself in the college world. Finding himself rejected by his own family members who were committed to the gang mentality, he succumbed to the desire for acceptance and ended up dropping out of school.

Before engaging the entire class in discussion, I grant students a few minutes to examine themes related to the skit or the lecture through three minutes of free writing. Students can frame their responses using either 'personal reflection' or 'sociological analysis,' allowing greater

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comfort for students who would rather not interrogate their own lives. To stimulate thought, I provide examples of each modality but grant students freedom to pursue any line of thinking:

[Reflection]

- Have you personally witnessed these family dynamics, how did they compare to the skit, and how did you feel watching it played out?
- What do you hope that we cover in our discussion, and why might it be important?

[Analysis]

- Does this model apply to all types of families or even other social groups?
- From the sociological perspective, how might other social variables such as race, class, gender, or age affect these patterns or the way people respond to this issue?

Students pair up and discuss any issues generated by the lesson so far, and I remind them

that they are not obligated to reveal 'family business.' Students often share openly in the dyad encounter and in the subsequent large group discussion; if the class has achieved a degree of closeness, one can anticipate that several individuals will mention their own experiences in alcoholic families. As a result, not only do some children of alcoholics discover that they are not alone, but other students also gain awareness of the pervasiveness of addiction. For individuals from addicted families, it is empowering to know that they are not 'crazy' or to be 'blamed.'

Conversely, it is possible that the majority of students will remain quiet as a result of discomfort with the topic or lack of knowledge of how to talk about it. In those instances, I encourage students to analyze the reasons for the silence and then have them anonymously write down any topics they want included in the conversation. I proceed to read these comments to the group to stimulate discussion. In general, instructors must be prepared for highly personal comments, responding with a combination of compassionate words and a sociological framing that helps students recognize the structural implications of the situation.

Indeed, some incredibly insightful ideas have emerged from this exercise, as students discover that it is safe and helpful to examine this subject. Typical comments address issues

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such as the challenges involved in changing roles, strategies for handling the sometimes disparate roles expected in multiple family situations (stepfamilies, extended families, etc.), and suggestions for avoiding unhealthy aspects of these roles in adulthood (heroes often become romantically involved with partners whom they wish to save). In addition to linking the discussion to course material, I reiterate the sociological contention that these behaviors cannot be explained solely by individual factors, but rather, are best understood as the result of the dynamic interplay between the individual and social structure.

Before concluding the exercise, I encourage students to consider other structural arrangements that profoundly impact their behavior. For example, based on the dynamics of their neighborhood, they may have been heavily influenced to adopt a certain styles or traits. We often act differently than how we feel or wish, and each setting produces divergent demands and identity outcomes. By appreciating the operative external forces, students are in a stronger position to decode these social settings and possess greater agency in making healthier decisions.

To close this portion of the session, I share data about the prevalence of addiction in families as well as insights from expert practitioners in the field. From a sociological perspective, we can appreciate that the social stigma surrounding addiction may have lessened in recent years, yet it is still difficult for many young people to disclose personal information -- especially when raised in families admonishing members who 'air dirty laundry.' Thus, these important ideas are disseminated for their personal use or to be forwarded to others in need.

My first statement is that one in four young people grows up in an alcoholic family, with social learning theory explaining why they are at greater risk for developing addictive behaviors. However, these individuals can break the cycle by realizing that parental addiction is not their fault and by learning from others some new ways to handle the challenges encountered at home.

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To that end, I distribute a handout with tips for coping as well as contact information for local resources and then conclude by asking the actors to state their real names to get out of character.

Moving immediately to the next exercise, I request that students think of anything that they wish they had said to a particular person in their lives. I suggest a few possibilities such as failing to apologize to a former romantic mate for an indiscretion, wanting to thank a teacher for being a positive influence, or perhaps desiring to finally reveal a secret to a friend. The issue does not have to be overly profound or personal, but it ought to have a degree of importance.

After each student identifies an example, I tell the class that everyone will finally have the opportunity to share the idea -- albeit to a classmate, not the actual person. Each student finds a partner and provides him/her with the identity of the message recipient. Then, both students take turns revealing the 'unspoken idea,' with the listener playing the role of the recipient and responding to the words presented. For instance, Student A resents mom's decision to spend the family's entire savings account on an abusive boyfriend instead of her own daughter's college education. Student B assumes the 'mother' character in this mini-skit and replies to Student A's words as she feels a typical mother would. The scene unfolds for about two minutes, before everyone switches roles so that Student B can initiate the discussion with his/her own issue.

I ask students to briefly explore the experience with the partner, thinking about their emotional response to the activity as well as how the relevance of status and role in the scenario. For instance, if the issue had taken place between friends as opposed to siblings, how would their feelings about the issue or the discourse have differed? How and why might there be divergent interpretations of what constitutes appropriate behavior for a parent?

During the subsequent open discussion, many students express appreciation for the opportunity to 'practice' their words and for becoming more aware of the plausible reactions from the intended recipient as well as the individual's rationale for that response. Indeed, some students report that they gained the confidence to speak to the real target. Thus, in addition to teaching course content, the lesson helps students to potentially be able to improve their lives.

Towards the end, I raise the issue of social construction of reality, prompting exploration of topics such as the impact of race and gender on interaction rituals and self-disclosure. Students have suggested that some comments -- or even the idea of confronting one's parents -- might not be possible in other times or cultures. Even the foundation of the experience, the open expression of feelings, reflects the values of a therapeutic society influenced by Dr. Phil and Oprah. In addition to offering meaningful sociological ideas, this discussion provides moments of humor, a particularly valuable commodity in the midst of emotionally charged activities.

Finally, just before dismissal, I distribute a short feedback sheet to assess the efficacy of the activities as well as to identify any concerns or questions. I announce to the class that if the lesson generated the desire to talk, students can feel free to see me or take consult the student counseling services. Several students have indeed approached me to continue the conversation. No student has ever revealed a negative reaction to the class session, either out loud or on paper.

5.4 Assessment results

Having recently changed institutions, I wanted to evaluate the outcomes from the lesson for a different population, and this paper examines students' reactions to two recent class iterations. The first class, a section of Introduction to Sociology, consisted of 14 male and 17 female students. Eight females and six males from an Introduction to Social Welfare class served as the other subjects. All students were African-American and of traditional college age.

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Entering the seventh week of the semester, both classes had established a healthy collective spirit, with many students feeling safe to reveal personal information and controversial opinions.

The assessment instrument (Appendix A) includes three Likert-type questions, using a five-point scale with higher numbers reflecting more positive responses. The first two questions measure students' feelings about how much they learned from the session as well as its personal relevance. Question three asks for their level of comfort during the session. With the goal of identifying correlations between family background and their reactions to the lesson, students are asked whether alcoholism or other drug addiction was present in their household. Finally, respondents are granted the chance to write any additional thoughts on the back side of the paper. Despite a limited sample and potential threats to internal validity with the research conducted by the teacher, the data still offer meaningful insights into students' reactions and the lesson's value.

Table 1: Assessment of effectiveness of teaching strategy

Question	All Students (N=45)
In general, how would you rate today's session in terms of how much you learned?	4.5
How useful was the information personally to you?	4.2
How comfortable did you feel?	4.2

Overall, the results demonstrate that students rate the lesson quite positively. While scores for the level of 'comfort' are slightly lower than some other measures, they indicate that students still feel relatively comfortable -- an especially meaningful finding since students shared very personal life experiences with family problems and addiction. Yet, I would contend that some degree of discomfort is probably necessary in order for some students to be intimately challenged to confront difficult issues and understand their social significance.

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Table 2 includes a breakdown of results based on whether the student reported growing up in a family with addiction. It is particularly noteworthy that the response for the lesson's personal usefulness among students from homes with addiction produced the highest rating. No other salient differences were identified in the data or the voluntary comments.

Table 2: Assessment of teaching strategy, with breakdown of self-reported presence or absence of family addiction

Presence of Family Addiction

Question	Yes (N=10)	No (N=35)
In general, how would you rate today's session in terms of how much you learned?	4.4	4.5
How useful was the information personally to you?	4.7	4.1
How comfortable did you feel?	4.1	4.2

The open-ended response section also provides evidence for the impact on participants, with three particular themes emerging in the data. At one level, students commented on how much they appreciated the chance to connect their personal lives to course material, in turn gaining greater understanding of the concepts as well as of themselves and their classmates:

I really enjoyed this class [session] because I could relate to the topic on a personal level... I learned something about myself today and I am glad because I am in the process of trying to figure out who I am.

I really could relate it to my own experiences. I think we should have lectures like this more often.

Some of the issues that were raised in class I could relate to myself, and it was good to hear that others have been through it, too.

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Second, a number of comments reflected the students' abilities to comprehend the larger sociological lesson about the centrality of social structure:

I never evaluated why children of addicted parents behave or take on the roles they do.

I knew in my family me and my sister [sic] had different roles but I couldn't explain why or what they were. Now after today I see how children fall into roles.

The theory explains a lot about what happens in families. I used to always wonder why certain kids acted the way they did. This theory shows why.

By asking if they had "any comments... about the class session or the issues raised," the survey may have led students to focus on personal reactions, and I suggest that contributions during the discussion evidenced changes in sociological thinking. For example, students raised provocative points about the centrality of gender in family roles, the effect of community variables on family dynamics, and the notion that academic institutions typically fail to offer sufficient opportunities for students to address personal concerns. As one student stated, "This has sparked something new in me – how much I really do act differently in different settings due to outside pressures."

Perhaps most importantly, a few students revealed that this type of learning experience has profound personal value for them and can sustain motivation and purpose in learning. By fostering within students some excitement for the learning process and the desire to utilize the information to better their lives and the world, the activity embodies the tenets of lifelong learning and integrative development espoused by Kolb (1984). The words of the students capture their interest in blending academic, personal, and social goals:

As long as I can learn from others and help them, I'll feel like I'm doing something here.

I feel like discussions like this are beneficial to our people to help heal.

I think the class session was very resourceful [sic]... The more knowledge I gain, the greater the desire in me to share it.

5.5 Ethical concerns and pragmatic solutions

In addition to assessing the effects of innovative approaches on learning, it is critical for instructors to consider the plausible affective impact on students. As Weinberg and Lusk (1994) suggest, the use of sensitive topics requires thoughtful planning and implementation. In their discussion of ethics in teaching, Grauerholz and Conaver (1994) suggest that, while often pedagogically meaningful, experiential activities could unintentionally produce emotional harm to some students, especially when addressing extremely personal matters. Thus, to ensure that instructors capitalize on instructional benefits and minimize potential risks, they must carefully evaluate their pedagogical approach and purpose. Students need to be properly prepared for these exercises and not feel coerced to share painful stories. As a student, Conaver attests to the salience of the power dynamics that may obscure from teachers how some learners feel violated or powerless when divulging personal business without reciprocal sharing from their instructors.

I contend that a variety of techniques used throughout the course proactively reduce the likelihood of a negative response to this lesson. As mentioned above, I strive to create an inclusive classroom environment that affirms the rights of students and supports open and honest discourse. From the first day, I offer relevant examples from my own life, with this notion of 'teacher as text' (Jacobs, 1998) encouraging an open and collaborative learning environment.

hooks (1994: 21) similarly articulates the need for educators to model this behavior for students:

I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share... It is often helpful if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material.

Furthermore, I specifically make reference to the statement in the syllabus that prepares students for moments of discomfort that inevitably occur at some point in the course. If we intend to rigorously examine social life and produce meaningful knowledge, provocative and

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sometimes difficult topics must be addressed. In my view, learning embodies the confluence of head and heart – and that transformative education requires personal engagement with issues of greatest personal importance to us (Shor & Freire, 1987). Although initially awkward, these moments can ultimately be empowering by helping students to better understand their lives and the world around them. While I inform students that we are not engaging in group therapy, and that I do not intend for considerable anxiety, I do offer some suggestions if they need support, such as reaching out to peers, keeping a journal, and visiting or e-mailing me.

The structure of the lesson itself avoids some of the problems identified by Grauerholz and Conaver. First, since students have the option of discussing their reflective or analytical reactions, they are not coerced into addressing painful memories. While promoting engagement in the large group discussion to generate new ideas to consider, I am careful to state that no one is forced to participate. However, in the typical class, a large number of students seem to desire to join in and share thoughtful insights and personal experiences that enlighten their classmates.

The second activity also provides students the freedom to select and explore an example of their own choosing. In the event that students are interested in using a more sensitive issue, the ability to process the experience with a classmate may offer a safe and meaningful context for obtaining valuable feedback. Finally, no formal assignment is required regarding the overall lesson that might place additional emotional or coercive pressures on students or the instructor.

Due to the nature of the exercises, the lesson may not be appropriate for all instructors to implement. In addition to possessing the requisite knowledge about addiction in families, instructors must have established a trusting classroom environment and be prepared to address any significant emotional responses that may occur. Instructors might also wish to assess how class size and demographic characteristics could affect the experience.

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While I believe that the lesson itself has intrinsic value, I have also written this paper to celebrate the benefits of affective-based learning in general and to encourage instructors to tap into their own ingenuity in formulating innovative ways to engage students. Certainly, there are risks involved in using more personal experiential activities. As a result, my goal is to reduce the possibility of harm while still allowing for the personal connection that enhances the learning process for students and assists them in developing sociological skills and practical knowledge for their daily lives (Greenfield, 2005). I agree with Hollander's (2000) claim that to avoid topics that matter deeply to students would constitute the abandonment both of our moral responsibility and of a critical opportunity to effect real change. The personal is indeed the political, and by utilizing students' experiences, we can make a powerful symbolic and pedagogical statement.

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Appendix A: Assessment tool for teaching technique

Please circle the letter of the appropriate answer.

In general, how would you rate today's session in terms of how much you learned?

Great	Good	Fair	Not Good	Awful
5	4	3	2	1

How useful was the information personally to you?

A lot	A good amount	A little	Not much	Not at all
5	4	3	2	1

How comfortable did you feel?

Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Neutral	Somewhat uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable
5	4	3	2	1

Was alcoholism or drug addiction present in your household growing up?

Yes	No
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Please use the back side of this paper to share any comments you have about the class session or the issues raised in class.

CHAPTER SIX

What's the Deal with the Middle-Aged White Guy Teaching Hip-Hop?

Lessons in Popular Culture, Positionality, and Pedagogy *

* Greenfield, D.F. (2007). What's the deal with the middle-aged white guy teaching hip-hop? Lessons in popular culture, positionality, and pedagogy. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 15 (2), in press.

ABSTRACT

As educators endeavor to engage an increasingly diverse student population, the curricular inclusion of elements of popular culture has been found to represent a particularly meaningful and successful approach. Research has consistently documented how utilizing issues of interest to students enhances affective links to the classroom and engenders stronger academic performance and critical thinking skills. However, the impact of teaching popular culture on educators themselves has been largely ignored, with this paper suggesting that these classroom experiences encourage a mode of reflective practice that heightens awareness of positionality and its impact on educational philosophy. Through an autoethnographic account of a recent course offering on hip-hop culture, the author explains how this pedagogical and epistemological standpoint not only benefits individual educators, but also has the potential to contribute to larger institutional transformation.

6.1 Introduction

The terrain of popular culture has become an increasingly desirable field for courses in higher education, as educators have discovered the tremendous benefits of incorporating subject matter of particular interest to students into the curriculum. Despite negative public commentary about the presumed frivolity of these courses (Young America's Foundation, 2005), scholarly inquiry and classroom exploration of diverse topics ranging from punk (One, 2005) to sports (Cochran, 2004) to graffiti (Nieviadomy, 2004) has consistently demonstrated positive academic performance outcomes. In addition to enhancing motivation, these courses provide a meaningful context for connecting course material to students' lives, with this epistemological shift ultimately leading to improved student achievement and critical thinking (Ginwright, 2004). To reflect this point and encourage pedagogical reform, an entire journal issue produced by the National Council of Teachers of English addressed the myriad ways in which popular culture could be infused throughout the curriculum to strengthen students' abilities to develop language skills (2004).

In particular, the curricular inclusion of elements of popular culture can have tremendous benefits for students from marginalized populations who are more likely to forge affective ties and maintain interest in school when their cultural realities are affirmed and respected (Nieto, 2004). Embracing this perspective, Mahiri (1998) writes that teaching hip-hop establishes "nonoppressive human interactions that increase the prospects of individuals finding their personal gold... [and] make viable connections between streets and schools to create more shareable cultural worlds for learning." As an example, I recall that after a workshop session I conducted, one young woman who approached to mention how excited she felt about her university finally offering a course related to hip-hop culture: "That class was the only time in

my education where I could be myself and explore things that I truly cared about.”

Demonstrating the centrality of affective ties in student retention and success, she proceeded to comment how, as the only African-American female in the entire engineering program, this energizing hip-hop course helped her to feel that she belonged and to remain committed to overcoming the persistent challenges.

Indeed, the focus on topics that matter to students increases the likelihood of the development of higher-order thinking skills. As Giroux writes, “Knowledge has to be meaningful to students before it can be critical” (1988: 14). Banks (2003) argues that the use of personal experiences within the realm of a multicultural approach to learning can help students to better understand the process of knowledge production and its socio-political implications.

Au (2005) suggests that rather than solely appreciating how popular culture studies benefits students by training them for academic success, these classroom experiences can also be utilized to encourage a Freirean (1970) type of social consciousness that challenges existing ideological frameworks and hegemonic practices. More specifically, Au highlights how a discursive interrogation of lyrics in hip-hop culture can assist students in formulating cultural critiques as acts of resistance to dominant societal narratives. In addition to articulating their profound institutional alienation, students could be charged with envisioning strategies leading to productive social action. Thus, on personal, pedagogical, and political levels, the study of popular culture has significant positive outcomes for students (Morrell, 2002).

Yet, despite the increased understanding of the effects on students and classroom dynamics, little attention has been paid to the plausible impact on educators teaching these courses. In this paper, I argue that, through the process of preparing for and implementing courses in popular culture areas, educators are more likely to interrogate their own cultural

frames of reference, to examine the student perspective, and as a result, to generate an enhanced appreciation of issues of pedagogy and epistemology. Indeed, taking from Brookfield's (1995) discussion of 'reflective practice,' I suggest that educators involved in this work may experience a level of awareness of the teaching and learning process that transforms their teaching and helps work towards an institutional culture that values innovation.

Building from earlier critical theorists (e.g. McLuhan, Hutchon, & McLuhen, 1977), Delpit (1995, p. 10) suggests that students benefit from internalizing "the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life... [and] the arbitrariness of those codes and of the power relationships they represent." I would assert that a similar phenomenon can be applied to teachers, in terms of challenging them to investigate their own distinct classroom 'codes' and the power dimensions explicit and implicit in their instructional approach. It is again my contention that teaching popular culture delivers a unique and dynamic mechanism for accomplishing this worthy goal.

6.2 Conceptual and methodological approach

In proposing the notion of 'pedagogical assumptiveness,' Greenfield (2006) references the tendency among many educators to resist examining the underlying cultural assumptions guiding their work. By failing to fully understand how identity shapes knowledge construction and pedagogical practice, instructors may be unintentionally establishing classrooms that reflect and serve their own learning styles and interests, and as a result, alienate significant numbers of students. This position draws intellectual strength from King's (1991:135) discussion of dysconscious racism as the "uncritical habit of the mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given." While not intentionally oppressive, a state of

dysconsciousness obscures the ideological conditions that end up perpetuating practices that disadvantage groups of learners.

I suggest that educators need concrete experiences that disrupt this self-normalizing tendency, with the symbolic interactionist tradition offering insights into how true self-consciousness requires both awareness and social experience. Through interaction, the individual becomes able to more fully 'take the role of the other,' and thus, to appreciate one's own contextualized identity framework (Mead, 1934). As a result, these experiences not only can deepen insights of self and other, but also generate greater emotional commitment to tackling critical issues for change.

For example, Upcraft and Gardner (1989) have suggested that the proliferation of first-year experience courses across the country has stimulated valuable dialogue around student development and the need for innovative teaching. In particular, academic faculty recruited for these courses encounter a potentially transformative experience, by moving away from their particular discipline and instead concentrating on issues of academic literacy and the socio-emotional characteristics of students. By thinking critically about the students' perspective while addressing material outside of their direct expertise, faculty members may gain greater recognition of how their own identity and background affect the educational process.

Thus, this paper finds conceptual alignment with Tetreault's (1993) discussion of 'positionality' as a significant force in shaping epistemological and pedagogical stances. Through cognizance of the ways in which who they are affects how they think and teach, educators are in a stronger position to deconstruct the normative assumptions brought to the classroom. It is suggested here that the inclusion of popular culture into the curriculum

represents a meaningful vehicle for encouraging educators to become more aware of matters of identity and to implement classroom approaches to best meet the needs of today's learners.

To support this claim, I will provide an in-depth analysis of a recent iteration of a hip-hop course that I have taught for several years. The discussion will primarily center on my work prior to the start of the term and the first month of the class itself, arguing that the bulk of the issues related to this paper emerged during that timeframe. Previously, I offered the hip-hop class at a medium-sized community college serving a diverse range of working- and middle-class students. I recently started at a small historically Black liberal arts institution in the South predominantly comprised of traditional college-age students from working-class backgrounds -- and with the change in demographics, I became even more interested in examining how my racial construction would impact the classroom dynamics. Technically, the course was a special themed section of Urban Sociology, which was required for all Sociology majors.

For the study, I used an autoethnographic model in which I self-reflexively evaluated my encounter with teaching the course. In discussing the unique epistemological vantage point provided by autoethnography, Fiske (1990) asserts that it offers a mechanism for a "theoretically structured introspection [to one's] own responses to... the interdiscourse between social discourses... and those through which [one] makes sense of 'self,' social relations, and social experience" (p. 85). Through acknowledging one's identity as a factor in conducting social inquiry, the texts emerging from this methodological approach can be more appealing "morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 745).

Before the start of the term, I spent considerable time pondering aspects of the upcoming course and potential pedagogical techniques. This practice continued during the semester, and by eliciting written and oral feedback from students, I gained a better understanding of their

interpretation of the experience. Reflections on this dialectical connection of self and students enriched the data and served as the impetus for several changes in my teaching.

6.3 Initial interrogations

The primary area of exploration centered on the complex set of relationships that may exist in a hip-hop-themed classroom. It is a powerful underlying assumption in the typical learning environment that the teacher represents the standard of knowledge for the particular subject being addressed. I believe that in my traditional sociology courses, students rarely question my intellectual authority in the field, believing that my status as professor necessitates that I possess the requisite academic training. As a result, even in the most democratic and collaborative classroom (including my own), students tend to maintain a sense of deference to the faculty member with regards to the material. Essentially, educators are seen as possessing full-fledged 'membership' in the discipline's culture, with students being invited to participate until deemed to have developed the mandatory credentials for becoming members (if they even elect to pursue this goal). As Eastman (1990) suggests, to move beyond acceptance within a culture into membership requires the ability to successfully internalize the common knowledge base as well as the meta-linguistic skills for communicating this competence.

In the hip-hop classroom, this frame could operate in reverse. It seems reasonable to suggest that the vast majority of my students would expend effort considering the presence and knowledge of a middle-aged White male teaching the course. Clearly, some young faculty members who grew up immersed within the culture could be granted credibility through manifesting culturally recognized behavior; yet at least as reflected in my situation, many individuals might not be automatically considered as members of the popular culture elements

under study. In traditional classes, students usually do not claim ownership of the material or the criteria by which an instructor's competence would be judged, with the educator usually only losing intellectual authority through egregious conduct. However, for this class, I suspect that respect and status as expert would in some ways need to be earned. While I still possessed the sociological expertise, knowledge of the specific subject matter might be the most salient issue.

In the course of these reflections, I discovered that, while I always fervently encourage student participation as a means of bringing new insights and energy into the learning process, these contributions typically serve as an accompaniment to my instruction. This case, with students' rich knowledge base often superseding my own, necessitated a different level of involvement and responsibility for the course from them. The concept of students as co-constructors of knowledge that was often theoretically meaningful yet pragmatically challenging to put into practice due to disparate skill levels would be a natural outgrowth of this experience.

Thus, the majority of individuals teaching popular culture have to make a more concerted effort to consider how they navigate their performance in the classroom. For example, if maintaining a purely academic persona, they run the risk of not only being perceived as a true outsider, but also facing potential derision for using the culture for their own scholarly gain. Depending on the validity and authenticity of the performance, those individuals hoping to manifest full membership in the culture could be highly respected for their efforts or face greater ostracism by trying too hard to fit in.

While I engage in reflection prior to every semester to determine my goals and the most appropriate teaching techniques, the process proved to be far more rigorous for this course. Issues focused on positionality that had relevance before now seemed to be even more essential components to address before entering the classroom on the first day. As a White faculty

member at a historically Black school, I thought quite carefully about how the course and my identity would be perceived, and thus, how to ensure that my self-presentation might be viewed as authentic and appropriate.

During the preparation phase, I decided that I would open the first class by reciting a poem I had written a few years earlier that served as a verbal response to an activist's challenge of my authority to teach a course on hip-hop due to my race. This performance would serve the purpose of demonstrating my rhyming skills -- with this display of a symbolic connection to the culture also representing an admittedly self-serving desire to gain credibility. Furthermore, by foregrounding issues of race, I wanted to indicate my willingness to actively examine my positionality in the classroom and to encourage critical analysis of the dimensions of identity and authority. I cannot recall any other time in my teaching career when I felt a challenge to essentially "prove" that I belonged. Ultimately, the surprising reality for students that a middle-aged White guy could "flow" reflected a dichotomous reality that my identity placed me in a partial outsider status but that my interest in hip-hop and ability to manifest a degree of competence within the culture generated some respect.

I also contacted a student whom I knew well and asked him to recommend songs that might be worth playing and analyzing in the class. As a self-proclaimed 'hip-hop head,' he simply knew songs than I did and was aware of emerging trends and artists. While this interaction might have been uncomfortable in another class context, the notion that I would solicit his expertise seemed to be perfectly valuable and appropriate here. In addition to allowing us to think critically about course themes and their salience in the music, the conversation symbolically served to strengthen the commitment to maintaining a truly dialogic classroom.

This interest in privileging the student voice also inspired me to change some assignments for the course. In most of my classes, students must complete a series of short reflection papers, engaging in a critical response to any aspect of material in the previous week. These papers always carried a small number of points determined by the student's ability to demonstrate thoughtful and original commentary. For this class, I discontinued the notion of grading the paper and instead granted points for completion, in the hopes of encouraging students to feel more comfortable sharing personal experiences or articulating controversial positions. Thus, their ideas would become the focal point of the papers.

Finally, I needed to problematize the assumption that our intellectual goals are intrinsically correct. My interest in hip-hop studies stems partly from a desire to assist students in critically examining the ways in which a form of internal colonialism has occurred within the culture, as capitalist forces have conspired to successfully market pathological images of Black men and women. I contended that if those students consuming the steady diet of scantily-clad females and violent thugs would only recognize their complicity in promoting an anti-intellectual ethos to the younger generation, they might feel compelled to become wiser consumers.

Yet, it was important for me to examine how this framework represented the outgrowth of my intellectual and social experiences -- and to be willing to concede that this perspective might not necessarily constitute the singular truth. Indeed, one could make the argument that the music is often ethnographic fiction, and besides, with the typically dysfunctional school, family, and economic systems pervasive in urban America, perhaps modeling the path of 50 Cent could function as literally the only avenue for social mobility existing for many inner-city youth. This realization prompted a greater desire to more explicitly and publicly interrogate this aspect of my

positionality for students. In the end, it was hoped that the ensuing conversation would assist us in defining a collective agenda for the class.

6.4 Classroom experiences

While I have taught for fifteen years and offered this particular course many times, I felt considerable anxiety when walking into the room on the first day. I had heard that the idea of the class had generated considerable campus discussion. Indeed, while the course in previous terms was capped at 40 students, the limit had been raised to 50 -- and I acceded to the request of an academic advisor to allow a few more students to sign up. A packed house greeted me that morning, even though most professors report that students typically fail to show for their classes until the second week. They seemed eager for the most part, and while the majority of non-introductory courses in Sociology only enroll students who are majors, the class was populated by a significant number of students from other departments.

For the opening experience of the class, I asked students to anonymously provide written answers to three questions: "How do you feel about a middle-aged White male teaching this course about hip-hop?" "Are there any benefits to having an 'outsider' in the role of instructor?" "What suggestions do you have for him in terms of producing the most meaningful course possible?" In addition to delivering provocative answers about positionality, the comments demonstrated that students brought considerable expectations to the classroom -- with one individual remarking that "this course is practically the only reason I feel like being in school this semester." To assess the general class attitudes, I perused the written comments while students formed groups to discuss the questions.

After delivering my poem and receiving a strong positive response, I explained that I considered myself a 'critical fan' of hip-hop. While celebrating its educational and political potential, I openly declared that I found elements of the culture to be highly disturbing. My particular standpoint is, in part, informed by my status as a latecomer to hip-hop culture. Not having grown up in urban America, I did not gain true exposure to hip-hop until working with inner-city youth a decade before in Chicago and admittedly initially internalized the dominant societal view derogating the culture. But through years of listening carefully to the music and reading about the culture – and with an urban sensibility and attitude that became part of my personality -- I gained true appreciation of the culture and can be considered a relative expert in the field. However, as I mentioned, hip-hop was not one of my main agents of socialization, as is the case for many students. While I claim to identify with the culture, I would not lay claims that it serves as the primary mode for defining my identity.

This aspect of my positionality can be considered somewhat epistemologically comparable to the realities described by Collins (2000) in her discussion of Black women as "outsiders-within." By participating in but not being granted complete access to dominant institutions, Black women's experiences provide a distinctive standpoint for understanding the complex dynamics of oppression and identity construction. A similar discussion is offered by Anzaldua (1987: 102) who suggests that residing in the "borderlands... changes the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave... creat[ing] a new consciousness." Indeed, the students and myself both could be seen existing in two parallel types of borderlands encounters, with the students being able to speak meaningfully about the academy from an "outsider-within" status while I perhaps could offer innovative perspectives about hip-hop culture from my position.

The impact of this framing could be seen in a meeting with one student during office hours a few weeks later. During a thoughtful conversation about 'the code of the streets,' I referenced Anderson's (2000) classic book on the subject to one student, establishing the author as an expert based on his thorough ethnographic work. After perusing the text for a few moments, Brent acknowledged Anderson's contributions, but still questioned his relative authority on the subject: "How can someone who doesn't have to *live* by the code of the streets really understand the code of the streets?" That comment served as the impetus for a vigorous subsequent classroom debate that helped students (and me) to more fully interrogate the relationship between positionality and epistemology.

After that first class session, I rushed to my office to more carefully examine their written ideas. In response to the question about the issue of a "White middle-aged guy teaching hip-hop," students almost unanimously felt that an individual from this background could be successful. However, several students expressed the need to ensure that the professor has adequate understanding of the subject matter, a concern that most likely would not be presented or debated in other classes:

Does he know what he is talking about? If he does, I hope that he is prepared to be challenged. Overall, I feel that as long as the White guy is knowledgeable, then it doesn't matter what his race.

I think it should be a very interesting experience. I really want to know what he knows that I don't.

I have no problem with it, especially if he is very knowledgeable about hip-hop.

Furthermore, some of the comments indicated a concomitant need to evaluate the professor's passion and ability to connect with the students and their perspective. To truly

'know' hip-hop, therefore, requires more than cognitive competence, but also sufficient personal and cultural appreciation:

The concept of a White middle-aged guy teaching hip-hop sounds crazy and far-fetched, but I believe it's possible if the instructor has a reasonable and realistic grasp of hip-hop and the role it plays in young Black society.

I feel that if you know enough about a subject and really feel strong about it, then I feel you can teach it.

I think you've met people in the hip-hop industry and listen to their music. Don't know if you *understand* it [emphasis mine].

As a result, a few students suggested that the experience established the classroom as a site for reciprocal learning and closer student-professor bonds:

The teacher can teach and also learn from the class.

Teach this course with an open mind.

The teachers needs to be around... and get to know the students.

Several students also provided comments about the need for the instructor to "stay yourself," highlighting the centrality of authentic performance and establishing the context for genuine learning about one another's perspectives and positionality.

Indeed, my reputation as someone interested in hip-hop culture and the connection built with students from previous classes may have allayed some plausible concerns about an individual from this background being capable of teaching this class. Thus, the notion of positionality still factors heavily into student interpretation, albeit a broader view that incorporates an instructor's personal style and background:

I think that if I didn't know the person, I would think he must be crazy. I don't have a problem with [the author] teaching [the course] because I know that he knows more about it than I do.

Honestly, if I did not know who the professor was and these were the characteristics that I did know, I would probably hesitate. However, I am a very optimistic person.

When asked about potential advantages, the majority of responses focused on discovering new viewpoints about hip-hop, especially through gaining insight into the views that presumed 'outsiders' hold towards the culture:

The advantage is that we get outside perceptions... from an individual who doesn't necessarily "know" hip-hop or thought to not know hip-hop.

He has an outsider's view of the usual African-American view of hip-hop. Therefore, he can challenge us as African-Americans to why we feel so strongly about hip-hop.

We may see things from a different point of view. This sort of breaks the boundary line of hip-hop being a 'Black' thing.

While the questions encouraged students to concretely examine the notion of positionality, I was also moved to more carefully consider additional elements related to my performance as the professor. Certainly, it was critical for me to demonstrate competence, but the underlying theme of 'understanding' to me represented not just 'technical knowledge' but also "personal knowledge" of their life experiences, the very factors that led many students to embrace hip-hop culture so strongly. I have always privileged the building of relationships in the classroom, believing that learning is indeed probably more due to affective than cognitive factors (Greenfield, 2005). Yet, the success of this class seemed to be even more linked to the personal dimension, and I needed to make my own life available to students to encourage more openness as well as to ground information in reality. hooks (1994: 21) similarly articulates the importance of educators modeling this behavior for students:

I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share... It is often helpful if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material.

Thus, stories about a variety of encounters in urban America that I never previously had shared with students ended up becoming prominent features of the class. For example, I talked

about a challenge posed to me when beginning work in an inner-city neighborhood. Standing next to me at the corner store, one young man announced to his friend, "You know, we haven't beaten and robbed a White man in a while." I knew the threat was not literal -- they just wanted to see if I would be easily intimidated or instead be able to demonstrate the heart needed to survive and receive credibility on the streets. Despite initial discomfort, I manifested my 'cool pose' and moved smoothly through the encounter, ultimately passing the street test.

Reflecting the hip-hop mantra of 'keepin' it real,' I offered the anecdote to present more of my authentic self in class. Drawing directly from my positionality, I felt compelled to offer these stories as testimony -- not only to show my awareness, but more importantly, to encourage them to take risks in sharing with me so that I could truly 'understand.' But this example also yielded concrete academic gains, as we were able to examine the men's behavior as a reflection of cultural capital and the notion of in-group/out-group thinking. Later in the term, I referenced the situation when exploring the emotional factors that contribute to many urban youth feeling trapped in their communities and avoiding escape routes such as matriculating in college.

With the ethos of performative self-expression permeating the culture and their interests in participation as revealed in the written comments, I also resolved to provide students with an opportunity to share their talents and celebrate the collective gifts in the room. Thus, I created 'Throwdown Thursdays,' setting aside the final twenty minutes of class each week for a student-directed experience. Essentially, the class could utilize the time however it wished, from students reciting their own rhymes to debating particular topics of importance to discussing issues from their own personal lives. The most powerful experience took place when a particularly shy young woman asked to perform an original composition and proceeded to deliver an incredibly beautiful and moving song -- prompting a lengthy standing ovation from

the entire class that heightened the student's confidence and enhanced class bonds. It would be safe to assume that this kind of spirited and emotionally meaningful encounter probably had never previously occurred in many of the students' school careers.

With hip-hop culture encouraging participants to manifest autonomy, this level of ownership of the class allowed for a greater sense of empowerment. I argue that, by feeling respected and free to be themselves, students appreciate the fact that they are not being forced to accommodate completely in their academic endeavors. This willingness for mutual compromise increases the likelihood of students putting forth greater effort throughout the course and creates a closer classroom environment. Yet these personal bonds are not merely "nice" entities, but as Meier (2002: 63) suggests, valuable factors in encouraging true critical thinking: "Caring is as much cognitive as it is affective. The capacity to see the world as others might is central to unsentimental compassion and at the root of both intellectual skepticism and empathy." Again, it was precisely my own recognition of positionality that prompted a desire to solicit viewpoints that led to these important developments.

At the close of the first week, I asked students for written feedback about the class.

While some students offered valuable suggestions about topics or expressed initial confusion about the link between hip-hop and urban sociology, the comments generally provided support for the course focus and the pedagogical approach. As one student wrote, "For once I get to learn about something I love." A few remarks centered on the issue of positionality, and the need to properly interrogate the dominant racial essentialism surrounding the culture: "So far you made us see that we don't know [as] much about hip-hop as we thought. We just assumed that because we're 'Black' that we knew what hip-hop was. Keep teachin' and do your thing."

One student subsequently utilized his reaction paper to more formally interrogate his ideas about race, expressing that he initially doubted that a White individual could meaningfully teach this kind of course. Brian proceeded to offer an intriguing original viewpoint that in some ways continued to operate under an essentialist framing:

In class, I thought that perhaps I wouldn't be able to learn as much from a White man. But after listening to his insights and awareness of the culture, this so-called White man is to me actually better described as a 'Clear' man, as he does not act like I presume a typical White man to act.

Indeed, based on factors such as my knowledge of the culture and genuine street-influenced dialect, I had been seen as transcending the perceived cultural limitations of my race. This position generated some anxiety for me, as I still recognized the existence of White privilege and how my Jewish cultural identity most likely influenced aspects of my connection to the struggle against injustice. Drawing intellectual energy from the paper, I invited a classroom conversation around the question of 'acting White' and 'acting Black' that challenged students' stereotypical perceptions and generated new models for understanding their own racial identity markers.

As a result, during collaborative examination of lyrics on the classroom, I encouraged every participant -- including myself -- to consider how their positionality might shape these divergent interpretations. Indeed, our ears often hear and feel the music differently than young people, and one could plausibly claim that the music does not always impact them in the manner in which we presume. Early in the term, I played a recording of Nas' (1999) acclaimed song, "If I Ruled the World." While offering several pro-social elements of an ideal society in which parents were "more conscious of the way we raise our daughters," Nas also provides a steady diet of narcissistic fantasies such as "smoking weed with no cops harassing," "owning stuff," and having "every girl I meet go downtown." I asked students to look beyond the notion of an

individual envisioning his perfect world and to investigate how the presentation perhaps spoke to larger issues and realities found in urban America; the subtext was a statement about the potential confusion or hypocrisy contained within the message.

One student from New York City stated how he felt personally connected with Nas' dream that reflected the wishes of marginalized people to be free to live as they please. Despite years of working in inner-city communities and a consciousness of these issues, I cannot fully appreciate the psychic impact produced by the emotional constraints of living in poverty. He proceeded to challenge my interpretation of Nas' message as duplicitous by claiming that the images presented in the song could simply be fantasies -- and that all of us have private desires that perhaps would not represent our best spiritual selves. Again, this startling revelation of the power of my positionality -- and the dominant ideologies that in some ways were being obscured in discussions of assumed obvious truths -- provided a meaningful educational moment for students and for me. To successfully teach popular culture mandates that one be open to recognizing one's limitations and to being taught by students.

6.5 A turning point

During the third week of the class, I detected that a significant number of students had not been consistently completing the assigned readings. Indeed, as other popular studies professors have similarly stated to me, a segment of the class typically comes to believe that their life experiences within the culture under study provides them superior knowledge when compared to scholarly discourse; thus, completing readings or assignments is sometimes interpreted as yet another exercise in academic co-optation. While at first using encouraging words, I quickly became frustrated and allowed these emotions to surface on several occasions.

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When I felt that the situation had become problematic, I asked students to pair up so that they discuss any feelings or concerns they had about the class. In order to obtain honest commentary, I requested that students write their ideas on the board anonymously while I removed myself from the room for five minutes. This dramatic performative act of leaving our community signaled both a potential state of crisis as well as hopefully my deep interest in their feedback.

As I was later informed, following a few moments of awkward silence, the students proceeded to engage in a lively discussion and placed a number of ideas on the board. When I attempted to return, the students demanded more time. I re-appeared a few minutes later to find a chalkboard covered with thoughts ranging from praise for aspects of the experience to elements of concern. I read the words out loud, and forcing myself to remain calm and truly listen to my students, requested further clarification regarding some statements. For the purposes of this discussion, I will focus on one particular comment that elicited tremendous reaction from students and a vigorous and meaningful subsequent conversation.

The question “Why are you so emotional?” seemed to stand out both by its huge presence on the board but also its bold power. Indeed, these words could either be read as an indictment of my style/personality or as a sincere inquiry to better understand the factors driving my approach. Again, while routinely inviting public feedback from students, I have never faced potentially such a strong questioning of my very being in the classroom. Even uttering the words out loud seemed to generate some anxiety among students -- some of whom appeared to be worried for me. I paused and again solicited their additional feedback. One student mentioned that my frustration level had been somewhat disconcerting to him, as it had changed the previously upbeat mood to the class. His comment actually served as a precipitating force in allowing some students to offer some other concerns such as the reading load. Again, I worked

hard to avoid responding verbally or non-verbally, ensuring that students felt safe to share and validated for their point of view.

However, after about five minutes of fervent discussion, a 23-year-old sociology major and football player who was well respected on campus raised his hand. In contrast to his usually upbeat energy, Marcus shook his head and soberly offered a profound statement:

I'm so embarrassed right now. Here we are Black students, and we have a chance to learn about our culture. And there's a White man who knows more about us than we do and cares about us and wants to teach it. Yet, we're complaining. I'm so embarrassed.

After a moment of reflective silence, a few students engaged the class in a provocative conversation about the notion of being taught by a White professor. While not overtly bothered by the situation, they did explain how it felt different for them -- and others chimed in to examine how these dynamics allowed us to learn from one another and plausibly gain new insights.

Waiting for an appropriate moment, I addressed their concerns carefully and thoroughly. First, I apologized to the class for losing my cool during the previous few classes and agreed to monitor these reactions. But I then boldly asserted that I would not apologize or feel any shame for being emotional, for being me, or for being passionate about their lives, the subject, and the educational process. A significant number of students burst into applause for the statement.

This moment seemed to become a defining one for the class, with the messy and noisy process of making ourselves fully present and vulnerable generating a greater sense of understanding of and commitment to one another. I discovered that teaching popular culture had produced within me heightened expectations and emotions, and that I owed it to my students to provide more detail about my own feelings regarding the teaching of this course. Again, while

appreciating how such experiences could emerge in any class, I suggest that the particular context of popular culture opens up greater possibilities for wholistic, reciprocal learning.

6.6 Concluding thoughts

The continued increase in offerings of popular culture studies in higher education attests to the desire among scholars and students to explore matters of social relevance and personal importance. By encouraging students to examine their celebrated icons and images, faculty members have a unique opportunity to develop critical thinking skills, enhance understanding of course content, and strengthen affective ties to educational institutions. Yet, at the same time, as the discussion here suggests, this work must be undertaken with considerable care and planning. Students who feel that 'outsiders' do not appreciate their culture will likely resent and rebel against these efforts, especially when the approach does not demonstrate full respect for the students and the culture. Thus, educators considering implementation of popular culture in their courses need to be cognizant of how their experiences and positionality shape their reactions and responses to the culture as well as their pedagogical approach.

With regards to hip-hop, I consistently face opposition from older educators who remain convinced that not only does the culture lack academic legitimacy, but also that its inclusion in the classroom constitutes capitulation to destructive social forces and a degrading of the sacred curriculum. With the 'gangsta rap' genre as their only frame of reference, these individuals are unaware of the more 'positive' aspects of the culture and also fail to appreciate the considerable *value of helping students become critical consumers of the worlds in which they inhabit.*

Continuously telling them that their music is pathological -- and that, by inference, so are they -- is counterproductive in the mission of promoting discourse and understanding. Educators who

utilize a collaborative style that grants legitimacy and authority to the student perspective not only enhance student motivation and learning, but also can experience their own tremendous intellectual growth opportunities.

As Buckingham (1998) suggests, teaching popular culture subverts dominant paradigms by positioning students as emerging 'experts,' and thus, successful implementation requires educators to be open to learning from and with their students. Through constructing collaborative classrooms where participants can bring their complete selves into the process of exploring issues of personal interest to them, teachers and students can realize the full potential of the educational enterprise. In the end, these experiences can transform the pedagogical practices and philosophical mindset of educators -- and when this kind of progressive approach insinuates itself into the fabric of institutional life, it can lead to a broader revolution of curricular inclusion and conscious education.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Toward a New Teacher Education *

co-authored with Professor Rajendra Chetty

* Submitted for review to *Teaching and Teacher Education*

ABSTRACT

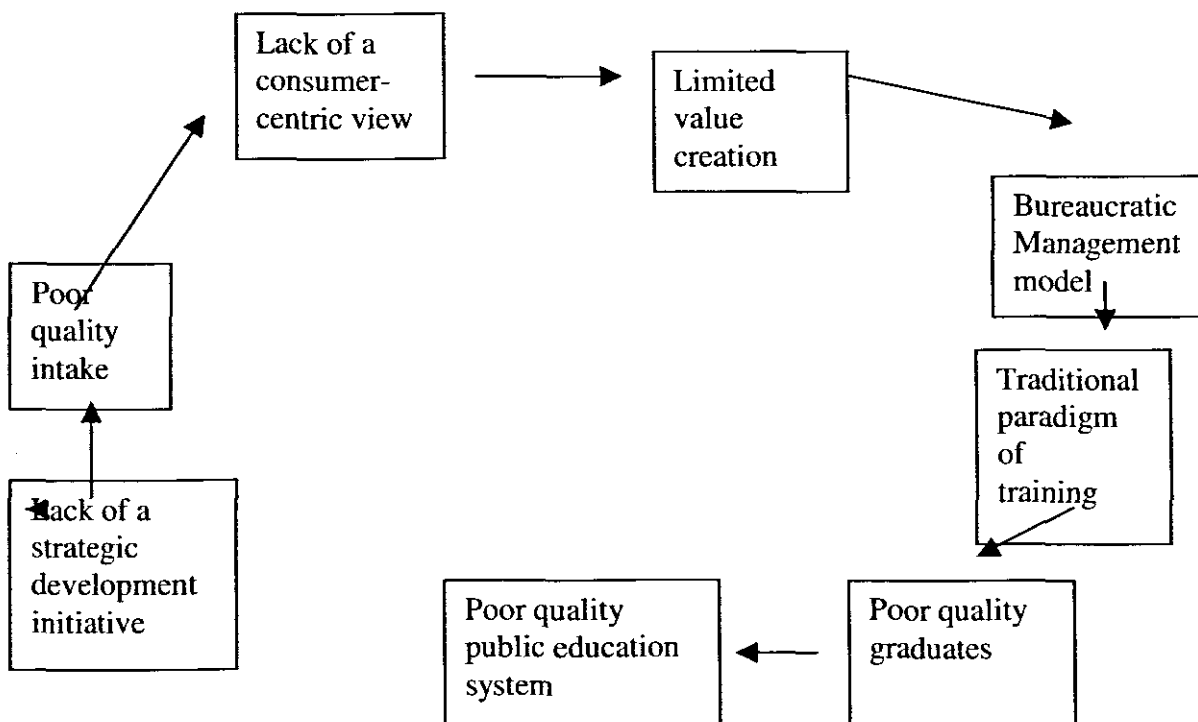
Influenced by both educational and socio-political imperatives, Teacher Education is a complex terrain. We argue that the traditional paradigm within which Teacher Education is lodged represents the most critical factor in its current multifaceted and troubling reality. Indeed, Teacher Education programmes in tertiary institutions do not adequately meet the needs of South Africa's schools, due to insufficient quantity of output (number of teachers) and inadequate quality of the teacher training itself. The primary focus of this paper is to provide a strategic development framework for the purposes of achieving a new Teacher Education, embracing the notion of 'conscious practice' as a means for best serving the needs of learners and a democratic South African society. A reflective practitioner approach and an understanding of Systems Thinking underpinned by Hoebeke's (1994) *Value Based Management Model* serve as the foundational theoretical elements of the paper.

The strategic development of the faculty conceptualized from Hoebeke's Value Systems domain would enable educators to step outside their internal perspectives of power, traditional frameworks, and narrow notions of the concepts 'teacher' and 'education' in order to gain a clear view of new horizons through students' eyes. In essence, the key elements of the paradigm shift are an appreciation of the concept of emergence, continuous improvement of current practice through feedback, and the strategic intent to create value and provide quality service to students. The end result would be the implementation of practices and habits of mind that would generate consistently improving teacher training programmes.

7.1 Introduction

Teacher Education in South Africa is influenced by the current educational, economic, social, and political conditions. The traditional paradigms still in place reflect conservative structural forces and serve as an impediment to meaningful change. Compounded with this situation are market-based reforms in education, persistent social and educational inequities, state regulation and accreditation exercises, poor performance levels in national and international audits in Literacy and Numeracy in primary schools, and major policy and curriculum changes (e.g. Outcome-Based Education and new graduation requirements). These top-down imperatives allow for minimal teacher input or ownership and place constraints on practitioners' time and energy for valuable reflection. Reflecting bureaucratic frameworks, the typical approach involves the 'expert' teacher maintaining control of learning and attempting to pour their information into passive students.

Figure 2: The implications of the traditional paradigm for teacher training



This paper is underpinned by a reflective practice model that yields a substantive critique of the traditional paradigm of teacher training. While an educational lineage tracing back to Dewey (1916) has articulated the pedagogical benefits of reflective practice, this approach has yet to become fully infused into most teacher training programmes and school environments. *Rather than merely blaming lecturers, it is instructive to explore the reasons why some academics maintain traditional ways and avoid the kind of self-reflective work that is necessary for developing new philosophies and pedagogies.* Once we understand plausible causes, we can more meaningfully endeavour to provide an appropriate context for encouraging greater awareness.

By looking carefully at larger cultural and institutional factors such as racism, limited funding, market-based thinking, and outdated pedagogies, it is clear that the practices of teacher educators connect with the values embedded within these milieus. While modernisation theorists have suggested that pervasive cultural change is an intrinsic consequence of macro-level economic and political transformation, Inglehart and Baker (2000) suggest that institutional development is 'path dependent'. Some segments of society remain traditional as a result of values inscribed within the national culture. We contend that educational pathways tend to be conservative and that closer examination of existing paradigms can lead to newer approaches.

7.2 The call for reflective practice

Building from Brookfield's (1995) discussion of the barriers to reflective practice, Greenfield (2006) identifies three contributory factors. The first, cultural *inhabitation*, refers to the idea that assimilation into our own cultural milieus leads us to follow operative frameworks that are seen as normative. With the dominant ethos of the positivist teacher-centred mode of

education being standard practice (Gardiner, 1998), many teacher educators have internalized these ideas and feel uncertain about visiting new epistemological and philosophical spaces. In addition, lecturers may also align themselves with peer groups that reinforce these particular worldviews.

An additional explanation would be the dynamic of personal *inhibition*, a condition characterized by concerns over the possible negative emotional consequences of engaging in critical self-examination. For example, it is our contention that a significant number of academics do not attend professional development or capacity-building offerings out of fear of feeling vulnerable or exposed as weak teachers. It is emotionally safe to maintain an authoritative stance in the classroom and assume the natural correctness of one's work.

Many colleagues have become accustomed to their styles, and without previous exposure to more innovative techniques, they may not be confident or comfortable with the process and its possible emotional effects. Of concern is the large number of teacher educators in South Africa who attempt to train students on emerging philosophies and curricula implemented by the post-1994 African nationalist state without themselves having experience in the new pedagogies. Others may indeed have a desire to improve their skills yet hesitate due to concerns over being labeled as 'deficient' by pursuing radical paths while operating within conservative bureaucratic structures. Thus, many educators might not actually be hostile to progressive concepts, but rather, need appropriate support and encouragement from academic leaders (who in some cases do not have credible academic and research profiles or leadership skills).

The notion of institutional *inhibitory* practices represents the third plausible factor. Many educators work tremendously long hours and struggle to find the time and energy for self-reflection. Without institutional support or rewards for pursuing these endeavors, it becomes less

likely that teacher educators will be sufficiently motivated to interrogate their epistemological perspectives or consider adopting new approaches. At the faculty level, some colleagues may feel that they lack the financial or human capital necessary to introduce innovative ideas and sustain these initiatives.

7.3 Conscious practice

We wish to advance the notion of 'conscious practice' among educators and teacher education paradigms as a vehicle for encouraging reflective work and awareness of the inextricable link between classroom practice, social structure, and ideology. Drawing from Freire's (1971) discussion of consciousness, it is argued that practitioners need to not only understand their pedagogical philosophies, but more importantly, to recognize how these belief systems either reify or disrupt hegemonic practice. In order for teacher education programmes to become more responsive to the needs of South African children and society, educators and institutions must intentionally challenge current thought and action. Thus, true conscious practice would embody progressive policies that effectively prepare teacher education students for these realities and fully appreciate the social curriculum.

The goal of this paper is to encourage Teacher Education institutions to develop a strategic development plan to reform their practices in order to produce high-quality graduates. At this juncture, we present a heuristic model that assesses the status of an institution's preparedness to engage in this action. Indeed, with outmoded and ineffective teacher education paradigms predominating in general, different sets of tactics may be needed in the effort to bring about true transformation, based on the dynamics of the particular institution.

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In the proposed framework, the variable of awareness represents the degree to which institutions value newer approaches to teacher education. Moving beyond a simple 'yes/no' binary to indicate the presence or absence of awareness, the category of 'resistant' indicates the situation in which institutional personnel are unwilling to even consider the value of these ideas due to being entrenched in a positivist paradigm. The concept of 'plan' refers to the existence of a concrete strategic development agenda for achieving better results.

Institutions lacking in both awareness and plans would represent a state of *dysconsciousness*, building from King's (1991: 135) definition of dysconscious racism as the 'uncritical habit of the mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given.' We assert that this category symbolizes the most common reality in Teacher Education institutions today, reflecting an overall lack of understanding and commitment. While perhaps not intentionally oppressive, the tacit acceptance of traditional belief systems as normative perpetuates a hegemonic condition by disallowing even the possibility of considering alternative arrangements.

As Foucault (1980) maintains, the ability of dominant groups to control discourse creates a silencing of dissonant narratives. With the ideological nature of this phenomenon obscured, educators presume the inherent superiority of their perspective and exacerbate the problem by stigmatizing alternative views. The endless debates about the foregrounding of content versus skills, theory, and pedagogies in Teacher Education is testimony of the power of the traditionalists within institutions to maintain the status quo.

Those rare institutions with both the awareness of new models for education and a definite plan would be considered to have achieved the goal of *conscious practice*. The condition of awareness without a plan can be classified as *latent consciousness*, in which

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educators have an appreciation of contemporary issues and the need for change but are lacking sufficient motivation or strategies to reach praxis. We suggest that a paucity of awareness but the presence of a plan of action (albeit misguided) would be categorized as *potential consciousness*. With effective engagement, faculties embodying these conditions can be guided to develop initiatives to achieve a higher purpose.

The most troubling conditions come from institutions intentionally resistant to acknowledging the need for more enlightened paradigms. Yet, for those in the *oppositional consciousness* category that do have plans in motion, there remains the potential for experiences that could generate an educational wake-up call. Those institutions demonstrating resistance and the lack of an agenda are classified as possessing the most powerful form of *anti-consciousness*.

Figure 1: A conceptual model

		Awareness		
		Yes	No	Resistant
Practice	Yes	Conscious practice	Potential Consciousness	Oppositional consciousness
	No	Latent consciousness	Dysconsciousness	Anti-consciousness

7.4 Paradigm shift

Morgan's (1979:139) notion of the technical level of paradigms -- involving specific methods and techniques to be adopted in order to make progress -- is central to this paper. The paradigm shift towards a new Teacher Education would include:

- Holistic approach to Teacher Education;
- Deep understanding of Teacher Education;
- Importance of change management;
- Human values;
- Efficiency, competency, and respect;
- Active involvement in school projects;
- Active involvement in student wellness;
- Promotion of academic discourse; and
- Promotion of a research culture.

As revealed later in this paper, interviews with lecturers and students demonstrate the large gap between the traditional approach and the new teacher education paradigm, with the students adopting a more holistic and integrated attitude to education. Of concern is the lack of contemporary knowledge around teacher education among lecturers, narrow approaches to ‘what is a good teacher,’ over-emphasis on content, and lack of a philosophical and pedagogical slant. The majority of lecturers were trained during the pre-1994 years on fundamental pedagogy (an Afrikaner Calvinist viewpoint of education) and there has been limited re-training. Strategic development must address this matter as a starting block towards the creation of a relevant Teacher Education programme.

One strategy for potentially encouraging academic discourse and a deeper understanding of the teaching and learning process is the implementation of ‘peer coaching,’ in which small groups of colleagues spend time observing one another, providing feedback, and stimulating discussion on pedagogy and philosophy (Slater and Simmons, 2001). By encouraging reflection and critical self-examination in a trusting, supportive environment, lecturers are more likely to open themselves and their classrooms up to colleagues as well as to consider alternative

perspectives and approaches. It is ironic and disheartening that teaching often remains an isolationist experience. By promoting activities such as collective dialogue and peer observation, faculties create an environment more conducive to collaborative exchange and growth (Garet et al., 2001). A critical component of these endeavors is ensuring that the coaching/mentoring relationships remain as developmental rather than as evaluative mechanisms so that colleagues can feel safe to engage in critique and risk-taking.

While fewer than ten percent of teachers attending traditional workshops applied knowledge gained from these sessions to the classroom, 88% of those also engaging in peer coaching successfully implemented new pedagogical approaches (Joyce and Showers, 1994). Furthermore, this strategy also represents plausibly the most effective means to encourage awareness and use of technology in teaching (Norton and Gonzales, 1998). Ultimately, student achievement blossoms in contexts where colleagues engage in peer coaching (Guiney, 2001). This technique also strengthens the sense of collegiality in the academe, a characteristic that is gradually being eroded with the renewed vigour of bureaucratic management styles.

7.5 New horizons through students' eyes

It is interesting to note that business has used the collegial model successfully. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) maintain that the co-creation paradigm is a consumer-centric view that contrasts with the limiting company-centric view. Essential to the customer-centric paradigm are the notions that:

- The student is an integral part of the system for value creation;
- The student must be active and should influence how value is generated;
- Creative students should be allowed to transcend the boundaries of their training; and

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- There are multiple points of exchange where the student and the academics can co-create value rather than a single point extraction of value from the student.

Student passivity is characteristic of the traditional paradigm. Greater information access enables more informed decisions, a global view, the growth of student networks, experimentation with skills and teaching styles, and heightened activism in social issues.

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2002) assert that the key strategy to counter passivity is constant feedback. Greenfield (2005) also argues that learning may indeed involve more affective than cognitive factors, since students who feel emotionally connected in the classroom and excited about learning relevant information have a greater likelihood of experiencing success.

Faculty must shift from content-based training to skills and experiences. To co-create value and optimize student experiences, faculty must focus on student competencies and strategies to harness them through mentoring and radical pedagogies. Student competencies include their knowledge and skills, willingness to learn and experiment, and ability to engage in dialogue around larger educational and social issues.

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2002:2) also identify four building blocks for co-creating value, which is beneficial in the shift towards a holistic Teacher Education model:

- Management must engage with students in an active and ongoing dialogue;
- Lecturers must possess access to all forms of information and knowledge and management must be transparent with information; and
- Under the notion of risk reduction, students should make more informed choices about risks and take on more responsibility for them.

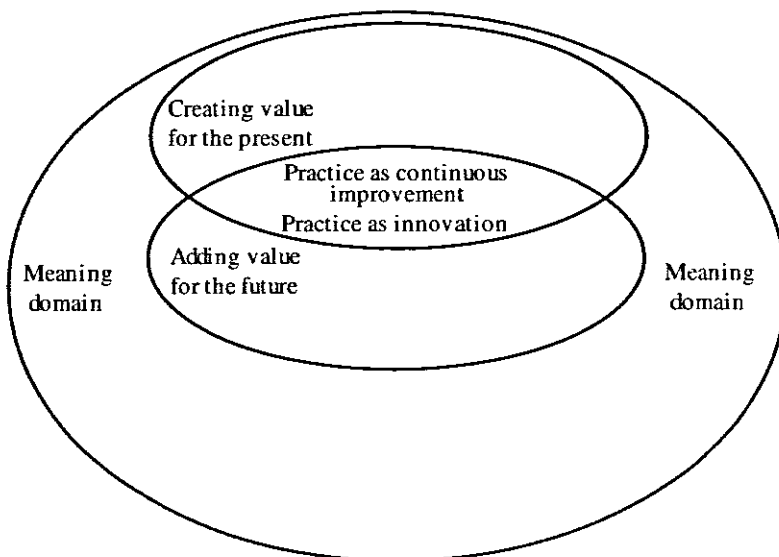
The strategic development of the faculty using Hoebeke's (1994) approach would enable us to step outside internal perspectives of power, traditional frameworks, and narrow notions of the concepts 'teacher' and 'education' to obtain a clearer view of new horizons through students'

eyes. The privileging of a student feedback-influenced-design instead of the narrow lecturer-traditional-framework can lead to better performance results and a healthier educational environment.

Hoebeke (1994: 37) characterizes the four domains of a work system moving from the present to the future as:

- Level 1: The added value domain. Its activities encompass a time span from 1 day to 2 years.
- Level 2: Innovation domain. (timespan from 1 to 10 years).
- Level 3: Value-systems domain. (timespan from 5 to 50 years).
- Level 4: Spiritual domain. (timespan greater than 20 years).

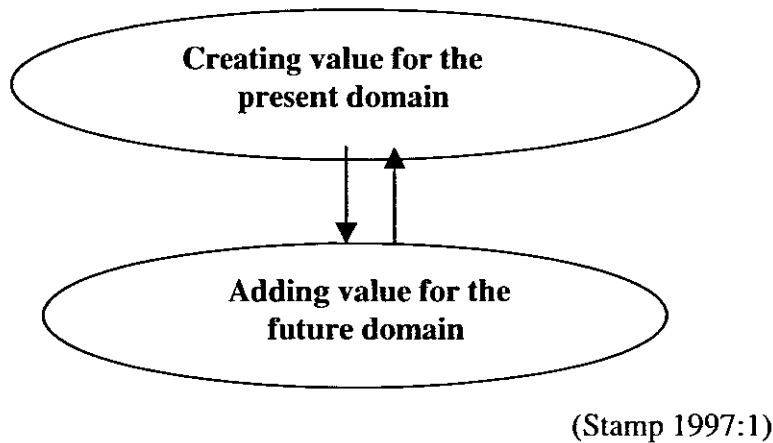
When we create value for the students (present domain), we also add value to the system of Teacher Education, enable a positive change in the public school system, and add value to society (future domain). Both the present and the future domains fall within Level 2 and the key concepts that represent the paradigm shift to the new Teacher Education are represented in this domain: practice as continuous improvement and practice as innovation:



(Stamp 1997:3)

7.6 Understanding emergence

It is valuable for lecturers to perform a constant analysis of the school context with continuous adjustment in order to remain informed of the eventual workplace of our students. It also does not make much sense to foresee the faculty in three/four years' time when the current situation needs to be urgently addressed. The future would always emerge different to our expectations. In his conception of the four domains of work, Hoebeke portrays the top domain within the notion of understanding emergence:



Meaning and sense emerge rather than being forced by the leader. It is imperative that faculty focus on improved managerial insight and the creation of an awareness of the shareholders' (students, society, schools, institution, and state) value in Teacher Education. Since the society represents the ultimate shareholder in educational services, the teacher educator has a large responsibility to take the needs of society into consideration. Shared understanding of the core educational philosophy of faculty should be extended to students as well as society. A strategy of renewal must be initiated, and sufficient 'buy-in' from the faculty as well as preparedness to work together is crucial.

A central concern is the shift towards a market-based scenario in public education. This reality is characterized by large intakes and limited academic support for under-prepared students, impersonal lectures with poor interaction, weak administrative support, exclusion of student needs, and an obsession with student numbers. To counter this problem, a more carefully formulated selection process ought to be enacted. Strategic development should shift the teacher training institution from prioritising being the largest provider in the region to a more valuable claim -- the best quality Teacher Education institution in the region.

7.7 Viable Systems Model

The Viable Systems Model (VSM) posited by Beer (in Espejo and Harnden 1989) enabled us to view Teacher Education as a coordinated and inter-dependent system with a multitude of links with society, the school system, and the state. The essential components of the VSM that underpin this paper are complexity and recursivity. The educational system, similar to all living systems, consists of a series of sub-systems that have self-organising and self-regulatory characteristics. The VSM structures the functions and interactions of policy, intelligence, and control in such a way to make paradigm shifts more effective. The parts within the system must be highly interconnected, interact effectively, and have information loops that remain open for each other.

Linked to the VSM is Hoebeke's (1994) framework of an understanding of workers' contributions to the work system. This paradigm shift actively debunks the justification for a meritocratic institution in which the abstract and complex thinkers are seen to have the 'right' to manage or even direct others. In order to maximise the potential of this mechanism for strategic development, every component of the faculty needs to play a substantial role and have a shared understanding of the new Teacher Education. There must be a re-think of the traditional

domains of work: the doers (lecturers) do not necessarily work within the lowest domain or thinkers (management) within the highest. Every worker within the system plays a role in the value of the final product, the teacher. There has to be a coordinated effort by all parts of the systems to ensure that there is a shared understanding of value creation and its importance.

In most cases, management and academics work within their own domains in a functional silo and territorial manner with little interaction and input for the vision of the teacher that they are producing. The bureaucratic management mode among top and middle managers in faculty militates against new approaches and innovative methods of training. The lack of a shared or negotiated understanding of what makes a good teacher and unnecessary antagonism in workplace relationships further compounds the problem. By advocating for autonomy for decisions, resources, and funding at the lower levels, the VSM promotes a shift from the top-down organizational structure found in most faculties. Lecturers are in the best position to generate ideas on new policy, and 'intelligence' should not be automatically vested in the higher echelons of power.

The VSM was used as a basis for understanding the paradigm shift as well as a reflection on our work context using critical management thinking. Reflection can be categorized into the following theory, practice, and context lessons:

Theory: Effective methodology

The level of effective methodologies will improve the success of the strategic development initiative. Hoebeker's conceptualization of the domains of work concomitant with Systems thinking as well as critical self-assessment operate as the foundation of this paper.

Practice: Understanding paradigms

Paradigms vary among people and cannot easily be changed. A good understanding of paradigms within the workplace is essential to establish successful relationships, change management and value creation.

Context: Understanding emergence

Meaning and sense emerge in an organization. It is imperative that faculty focuses on improved managerial insight and the creation of an awareness of the shareholder (students, society, schools, institution, and state) value in Teacher Education. A wide lens and more integrated perspective of what processes take place in Teacher Education are essential entities for a paradigm shift.

7.8 Methodology

In order to better understand current attitudes and belief systems, primary data were collected via interviews with undergraduate students and staff at a teacher education institution in the Western Cape, South Africa. Eight focus group interviews were conducted with 40 teacher education students (5 per group) from July to October 2005. All respondents were selected through simple random sampling, with students from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes included. Questions that students answered with regard to customer satisfaction in the institution were:

1. How effective are the communication channels?
2. What aspects of your training are you satisfied with?
3. What changes would you implement in teacher training?
4. What value is created in you?
5. What value do you add to the faculty?
6. Why would you return/not return to the institution for further training?

One-to-one interviews were conducted with 10 lecturers in the faculty, including the following questions:

1. How effective is communication and feedback to/from students?
2. What is your vision for teacher education?
3. What is your understanding of the concept 'education'?
4. What is your notion of a good teacher?
5. Are you satisfied with the current approach to Teacher Education?
6. In what ways do you think training approaches can be improved?
7. What are the most important primary activities that you engage in?
8. What are your personal measures of success with the students that you train?
9. How does the faculty support/impede your value creation endeavours?

The standardized questions for respondents ensured that all relevant areas were covered adequately and consistently. The latter part of the interview provided for open responses to key issues around the perceived need for a paradigm shift.

The Systems Thinking approach guided our work in categorizing key concepts emerging from interviews, with the relative weight of the concepts measured in an Interrelation Diagram (ID) for lecturers and students. In addition to quantifying these concepts in a table, we established a Causal Loop Diagram (CLD) for students (Figure 3: Appendix B) and lecturers (Figure 4: Appendix C).

The 8 key concepts that emanated from the findings were put in a circle and compared with each other to determine which concepts influence or are influenced by other concepts (between 7 to 9 key concepts are ideal for Interrelation Diagrams). An arrow was drawn from the influencing concept to the dependent concept. The arrows away from a concept is a *driver* and arrows to a concept are *outcomes*. The *score* was calculated by subtracting the *outcomes*

from the *drivers* of a particular concept. For example, the concept *Holistic approach* influences all the other 7 concepts and is therefore considered to be a dominant driver.

Table 3: Interrelation diagram of key concepts for students

Lessons	Driver	Outcome	Score
Holistic approach	7	0	7
Management Dialogue	3	4	-1
Efficiency	3	4	-1
Competency	3	4	-1
Educational Discourse	1	6	-5
Student wellness	1	6	-5
Philosophy & Pedagogy	4	3	1
Humane Treatment	6	1	5

The main drivers for the student approach towards a paradigm shift in Teacher Education are a Holistic approach and Humane Treatment of students. Their main foci of activities were centered on the need for a relevant and viable Educational Discourse to prepare them for the academic perspective of teaching and to understand education from a social and theoretical lens. Student wellness was also a major outcome, with almost all students complaining that lecturers are too busy to get involved in student welfare. The main enablers for the students were dialogue with management, an efficient administration system, competent lecturers, and a strong philosophical and pedagogical perspective to their training instead of the current content-driven model.

A similar process was followed for the key concepts that emanated from the lecturers, and the eight categories that were constructed using the Interrelation Diagram process are reflected in the following table:

Table 4: Interrelation diagram of key concepts for lecturers

Lessons	Driver	Outcome	Score
Poor academic leadership	6	1	5
No shared vision and mission	6	1	5
Heavy teaching loads	5	2	3
Focus on content	4	3	1
Personalised view of education	2	4	-2
Policy and curriculum changes	2	4	-2
Focus on methodology	2	5	-3
Lack of resources	0	7	-7

While teachers demonstrated sincere passion for their jobs, it is evident in the findings that there is no shared mission or vision for the Faculty and consequently no shared understanding of value creation in Teacher Education. Elements of the traditional paradigm of Teacher Education surfaced strongly in their personalized analyses of the concept of Education: poor academic leadership; the content-driven approach leading to heavy teaching loads; complaints about curriculum and policy changes by the State; and emphasis on subject-specific

methodology. The notion of lack of resources permeated much of the findings and the consequence was little research into contemporary issues around the subject matter, no funding for substitute personnel to create free time for research, and little use of technological innovation in programmes.

A comparison of the students' and lecturers' Causal Loop Diagrams (Appendices B and C) reveals a large gap in thinking and philosophy in Teacher Education. While the lecturers were stuck in traditional frameworks of thinking, the students advocated a more radical and holistic approach. Their perspective highlighted concerns around competency of academics, need for greater dialogue with management and academics, and a customer-centric approach to training with emphasis on humane treatment and student wellness. The most startling finding is the new horizons for Teacher Education that the students envisage, by privileging the importance of educational discourse to permeate in the faculty and the central role of philosophy and pedagogy in teacher training (see also Cochran-Smith 2005:5).

7.9 Conclusion

These results demonstrate a significant disconnect between the needs of students and the philosophical approaches adopted by their lecturers – and thus, speak to the importance of pursuing a new paradigm in Teacher Education. As stated at the outset of this paper, teacher educators have long operated within a traditional mindset that not only disadvantages their students, but also perpetuates a problematic cycle for subsequent generations. In particular, we are concerned about the impact on the increased number of previously disadvantaged students who depend on high-quality instruction and support as the primary pathway for social mobility.

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Through utilising a strategic development model, lecturers become more likely to reform their approach in order to achieve more promising outcomes. With effective institutional management and efficient administrative support, lecturers can engage in the kind of reflective practice that encourages them to adopt innovative pedagogical models. It is suggested that considerable individual, cultural, and structural forces operate to inhibit reflective work and the development of new ideas and tactics. However, once educators better appreciate these dynamics and internalise a more meaningful framework, they will hopefully become inspired to work towards enlightened thinking and value creation in their students. Future work in this area would address the plausible need to modify these models based on the type of institutions or students.

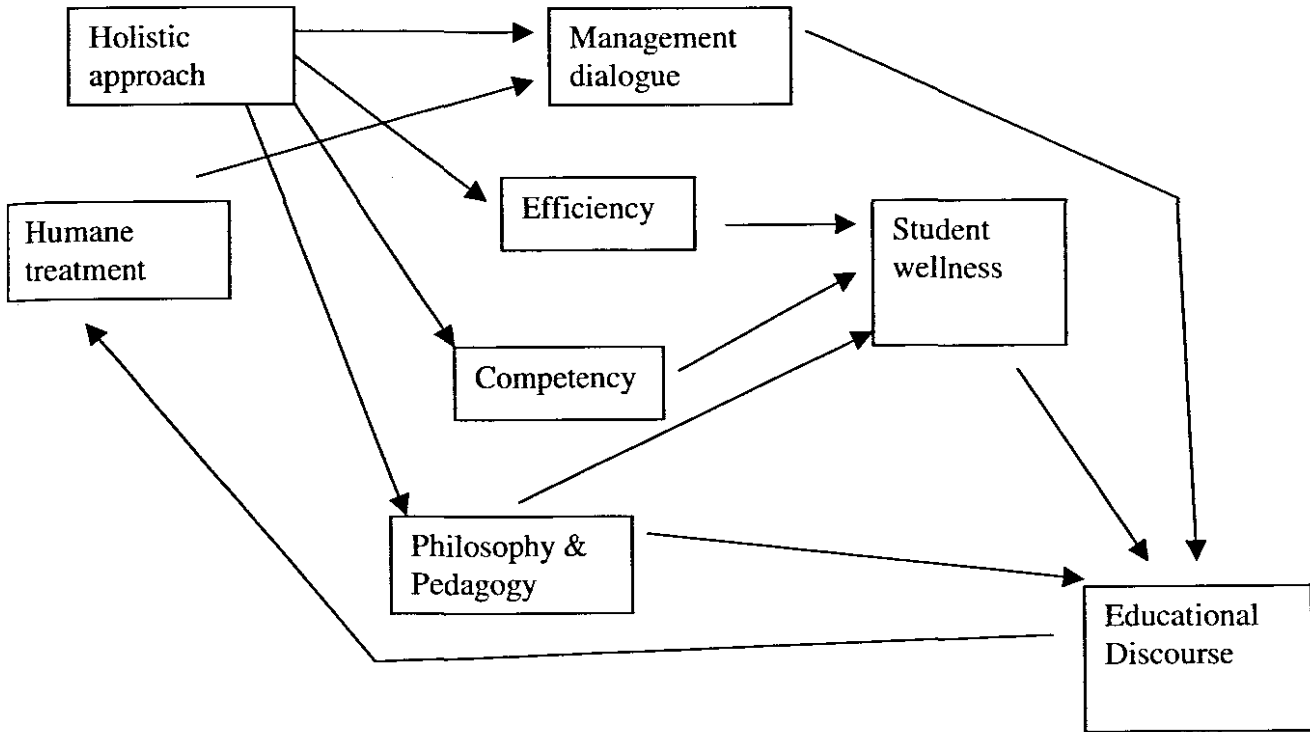
The next step is identifying the most successful training strategies for encouraging this type of awareness. We hope that the introduction of these ideas can serve as the impetus for stimulating spirited dialogue among teacher educators and students. Yet, ultimately, the challenge is to capitalise on this knowledge and turn discourse into meaningful praxis.

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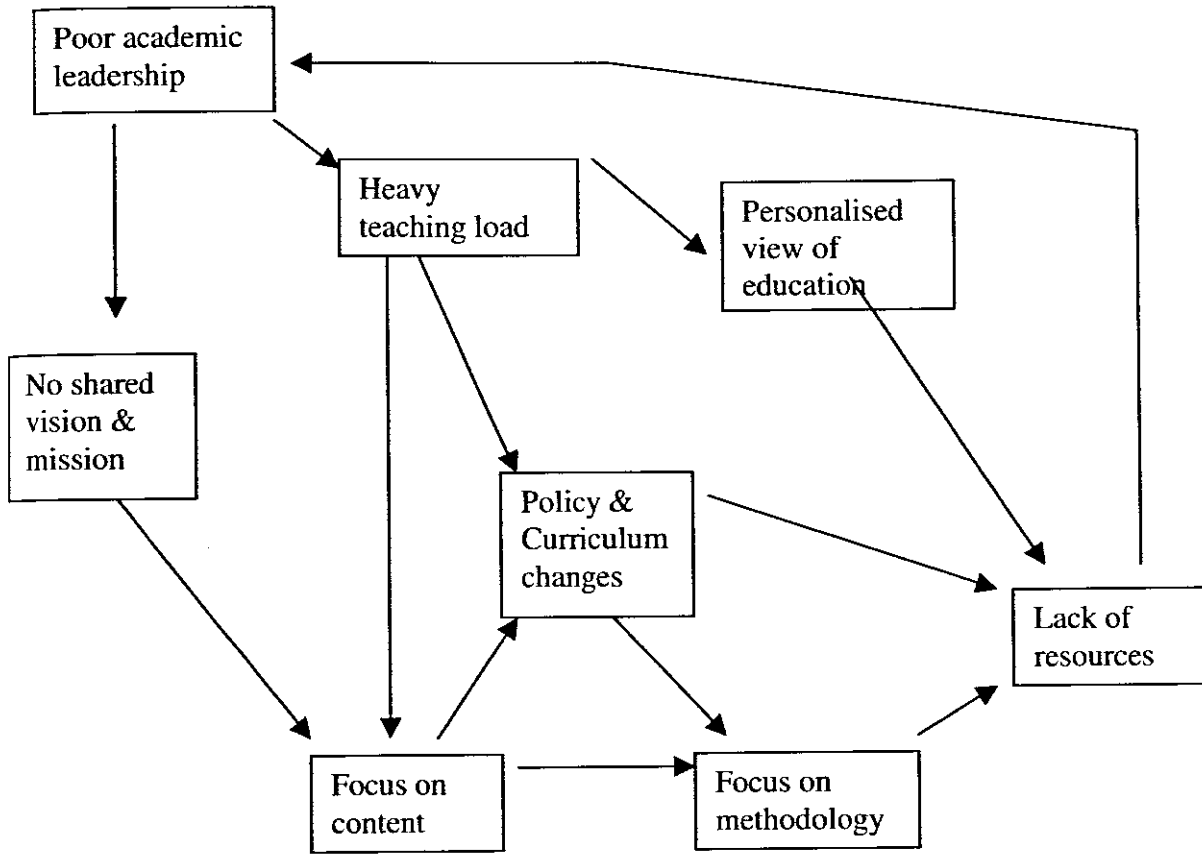
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Appendix B: Causal Loop diagram of key concepts for students



Appendix C: Causal loop diagram of key concepts for lecturers



CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

8.1 Central components of the thesis

This thesis has addressed the instructional and institutional benefits of encouraging a philosophy of 'conscious practice' in education. By intentionally interrogating one's positionality and the operative paradigms in classrooms and schools, educators can recognize the ways in which their pedagogical habits may be unintentionally disadvantaging certain populations of students and serving to reify dominant ideological positions. As a result of incorporating self-reflective approaches and inviting the students' perspective, educators are in a stronger position to adopt more progressive approaches that promote equity and higher-level performance -- and to advocate for more progressive practices at the institutional level as well.

In the United States, only 54% of entering tertiary students complete their degrees six later, with the rates for students of color and low-income students falling well below fifty percent (Pope, 2005). While a host of causally efficacious factors explain portions of this phenomenon, it seems evident that a significant number of students drop out due to experiencing 'academic alienation.' Feeling a sense of disconnection in the classroom -- thus resulting in *underachievement* -- these students often come to believe that, as I have heard from many young people, 'college isn't for everybody.' While the statement may contain a partial truism, it is typically proffered as a mechanism for explicating that particular student's frustration for not finding a meaningful affective linkage with the specific institution or the academic enterprise in general.

Perhaps the most destructive aspect of this process might be a variation on Payne's (1984) notion of rationalization of failure, in that both the students and the teachers essentially cast blame for this phenomenon on the students' purported inadequacies rather than investigate the complex set of interrelated environmental forces that increase the likelihood of alienation. In

particular, students who typically face marginalization in academia (i.e. first generation in college) are often criticized for not assimilating into a culture that seems irrelevant or even hostile to them. By placing the fault solely on these students' shoulders, institutional representatives can absolve themselves of responsibility – ultimately teaching powerful lessons about social inequality. This significant aspect of the 'hidden curriculum' (Apple, 1990) operates to perpetuate conservative practice and naturalize the existing social order.

8.2 Domains for change

I have argued in this thesis that the persistence of traditional pedagogical habits emerges from the confluence of three interrelated factors -- inhabitation of ideologically conservative milieus, inhibition due to perceived emotional consequences, and inhibitory practices at the institutional level. While the emphasis here has been largely on the existence of these forces within the domain of the professional educator, it must be emphasized that the epistemological foundations of these practices originates within the academy that socializes its members to reproduce these patterns. Graduate students are largely focused on the production of knowledge in their particular discipline, not on the issues of teaching which will become the bulk of their responsibility in future years (Graff, 2003). Satisfying the demands of research committees is the transcendent concern.

This form of hegemonic control remains unchallenged due to its perceived normative nature. As Boggs (1976: 39) notes, "Hegemony in this sense could be defined as an organizing principle, or worldview, that is diffused by agencies or ideological control and socialization into every area of life." Under the positivist paradigm internalized during graduate training, professors often view knowledge as something that they possess and must pass on to students --

with the monologic approach of lecturing becoming the primary modality (Sperber, 2000). With traditional doctoral programs offering little training in the scholarship of teaching and learning or critical pedagogy, individuals entering the professoriate will typically continue to replicate these patterns. As Braa and Callero (2006) suggest, it is ironic that even the disciplines such as sociology that remain dedicated to critical discourse have generally failed to apply this perspective to an analysis of teaching and learning. Thus, considerable work needs to be done within university settings to promote a culture that values and promotes conscious practice in all aspects of scholarly endeavor.

To accomplish the goal of true praxis in education, educators will need to re-think the traditional model of education that encourages student passivity, especially when purportedly preparing students for a workforce that emphasizes the ideal of collaboration (Walker & White, 2003). It may be initially difficult for educators and students alike to feel comfortable with more innovative practices. Indeed, I have argued that many educators resist new pedagogical models not out of hostility to the concept per se, but rather, largely due to affective concerns. In some cases, these individuals fear the notion of relinquishing “some of their supposed omnipotence and omniscience in the classroom” (Sperber, 2000: 85) and have not been trained in alternative techniques for pursuing the co-construction of knowledge. It is safer and easier to resort to lecturing.

Similarly, most students have learned the ‘game’ and accept the traditional models, even when they fail to work for them. In many cases, they have been rewarded for being passive consumers of information presented in the classroom (Graff, 2003), or they recognize how power dynamics may still operate in contexts ostensibly designed to foster egalitarianism (Brookfield & Preskill 1999). It is therefore essential that progressive education not become the domain of a

few isolated individuals, but instead, woven through the fabric of the institution and consistently worked on to ensure its highest level of efficacy.

8.3 The partnership paradigm

To obtain substantial transformation, a spirit of partnership must develop into a prominent feature of educational environments (Finley, 2004), with the objective of encouraging healthy exchange among educators and between educators and students. Indeed, educators tend to operate in solitary spheres, rarely interacting with each other to critically examine their pedagogical practices:

The individualistic culture of teaching results in isolation among colleagues that resembles commuters waiting briefly in a train station. Each commuter is headed toward the same destination but is standing alone, ensconced in his or her own thoughts, newspapers, and private space (Intrator, 2002: xlvi).

By embracing the benefits of collaboration through engagement with their peers, educators become more likely to introduce these principles into the classroom. In contrast with the typical modality that alienates students and silences their important voices (Talbert & White, 2003), partnership in the classroom offers to students a feeling of respect and dignity that leads to heightened interest and participation (Eisler, 2000). When experiencing a truly democratic classroom where all forms of knowledge are validated and carefully interrogated, students experience a greater interest in the learning process (Luke, 1998).

This thesis has sought to offer readers some concrete strategies for bringing these ideas into fruition. However, it is critical for educators to actively pursue a level of self-reflective work that allow them to discover the most meaningful approaches and techniques for them personally. It would be sadly ironic for this thesis to impose a singular, definitive standard for

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greater satisfaction among educators and higher levels of performance among students. It is to these ends that we all ought to remain dedicated and active.

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PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Five of the articles in this thesis have been published in journals and books, with one more awaiting final review. While only one of these sources is considered ‘accredited,’ I contend that they are highly regarded scholarly publications with many distinguished scholars included on their editorial boards. All publications involve a formal peer-review refereed process. Furthermore, most universities offering the ‘thesis by journal article format’ option merely require doctoral students to submit their papers for consideration, not obligate them to have them officially published. I have included information about these sources here.

Journal on Excellence in College Teaching

The *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* is a peer-reviewed journal published at Miami University by and for faculty at universities and two- and four-year colleges to increase student learning through effective teaching, interest in and enthusiasm for the profession of teaching, and communication among faculty about their classroom experiences. The *Journal* provides a scholarly, written forum for discussion by faculty about all areas affecting teaching and learning, and gives faculty the opportunity to share proven, innovative pedagogies and thoughtful, inspirational insights about teaching.

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- Doug Eder, *Arizona State University*
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Communication Skills in University Education (book)

This edited volume of papers presented at the Communication Skills in University Education Conference held in the Kingdom of Tonga involved a double-blind, peer reviewed process, as stipulated in the book’s forward.

Equity & Excellence in Education

Equity & Excellence in Education (University of Massachusetts-Amherst School of Education) publishes articles based on scholarly research utilizing qualitative or quantitative methods, as well as essays that describe and assess practical efforts to achieve educational equity and are contextualized within an appropriate literature review. We consider manuscripts on a range of topics related to equity, equality and social justice in K-12 or postsecondary schooling, and that

focus upon social justice issues in school systems, individual schools, classrooms, and/or the social justice factors that contribute to inequality in learning for students from diverse social group backgrounds. This peer-reviewed refereed journal provides a record of those important experiments and ventures.

Editorial Board:

Rodolfo Acuña - *California State University, Northridge*

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Gary Orfield - *Harvard Graduate School of Education; John F. Kennedy School of Government*

Valerie Ooka Pang - *San Diego State University*

Dennis D. Parker - *NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.*

Charles V. Willie - *Emeritus, Harvard University Graduate School of Education*

Teaching Sociology

This journal is included in the ISI master list of scientific journals and is an official publication of the American Sociological Association.

Pedagogy, Culture & Society

Pedagogy, Culture & Society is a fully-refereed international journal that seeks to provide an international forum for pedagogy discussion and debate. The identity of the journal is built on the belief that pedagogy debate has the following features:

- Pedagogy debate is not restricted by geographical boundaries: its participants are the international educational community and its proceedings appeal to a worldwide audience.
- Pedagogy debate is open and democratic: it is not the preserve of teachers, politicians, academics or administrators but requires open discussion.
- Pedagogy debate is eclectic and interdisciplinary: it draws on a wide range of different intellectual and practical traditions to clarify core problems and sustain deliberation.
- Pedagogy debate is concerned with the past, present and future: it involves thinking reflectively and critically about pedagogy policy and practice with the aid of organising concepts such as culture, politics and ideology.

- Pedagogy debate is culturally diverse: it involves communication between participants whose thinking is shaped by different cultural conditions ranging from the 'post-colonial' condition of many African and Asian countries to the 'post-centralised' condition of Eastern Europe and the 'post-modern' condition of Western liberal democracies

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Volker Wedekind - *University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

Lyn Yates - *University of Technology, Sydney, Australia*

Teaching and Teacher Education

The final paper in this thesis is currently in the final stages of review for publication in *Teaching and Teacher Education*, an international refereed journal included on the ISI list.