Outsiders/Within and In/Outsiders: Varieties of Multiculturalism

Mary F. Rogers
University of West Florida

Kathy McKibben Hoover

ARTICLE

Outsiders/Within and In/Outsiders: Varieties of Multiculturalism

Mary F. Rogers, Ph. D., (Deceased) University of West Florida
Kathy McKibben Hoover, Ed. D., Adjunct Professor

Kathy Hoover: In one's lifetime many visit but few leave an imprint that encourages, teaches, and inspires. Dr. Mary F. Rogers was one such unique guest who passed away shortly after this article was completed. Teacher, mentor, and friend, she changed the lives of each student she graced with her dedication and wisdom. She is greatly missed by her students, colleagues, friends, and very much by the world she touched.

Abstract

In this paper we look at *outsiders/within*, a pivotal concept in not only women's studies, but also in racial/ethnic studies and the social sciences, especially sociology. After showing how problematic this modernist notion tends to be, we theoretically complicate it. Thereafter, we show how once theoretically embellished, some version of this concept offers a foundation for a postmodernist multiculturalism that is necessarily and inclusively feminist.

Outsiders/Within and In/Outsiders: Varieties of Multiculturalism

Like Adrienne Rich's (1980) lesbian continuum, Patricia Hill Collins's (1991) concept of a *matrix of domination* has been pivotal in women's studies and racial/ethnic studies, as well as in other areas of teaching and research concerned with social justice (Johnson, 2005). With its emphasis on the interlocking character of established social hierarchies, this concept dovetails with the idea of intersectionality (Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005; Simien, 2007), which similarly emphasizes the need to analyze hierarchies such as social class in connection with other hierarchies such as ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and age. In other terms, "[m]ore than one category of difference…plays a role" (Hancock, 2007, p. 251) in every social problem, such as elder abuse or environmental racism.

Another of Collins's central concepts is *outsider/within* (Collins, 1986; Collins, 1991; Collins, 1998; Collins, 1999) whereby she emphasizes, in particular, how gender and race commonly constitute *insiders* and *outsiders* in organizations that white males control. Thus, women of all racial/ethnic groups and men of color join such organizations more or less as outsiders whose formal membership fails to deliver the full benefits that presumptively straight, apparently able-bodied white male members routinely enjoy. As with the matrix of domination, this concept illuminates commonplace inequities, including social and psychological wounds, that outsider members of an organization typically experience. They join, after all, an organization whose hierarchy and culture reflect its insider-group control.

Yet this notion of outsider/within is woefully problematic, especially from postmodernist perspectives. Based on the binary insider/outsider rather than on a continuum of privilege and oppression, *outsider/within* entails neither an interrogation of outsider nor an interrogation of *within*. Yet these two notions cover a multiplicity of situations that differ radically in members' lived experiences as well as in their prospects and outcomes.

Significantly perhaps, the absence of critical reflection about outsider and within parallels two broad groupings within contemporary multiculturalism. As we will see, one grouping tends not to interrogate the intersections of race with gender, social class, sexuality, age, disability, or other social hierarchies; the other grouping takes these intersections as its focus. In this paper, then, we explore how the theoretical shortcomings of one concept can illuminate shortcomings in the larger frameworks it informs. Thereby, we underscore the theoretical and practical ramifications of concepts that pass muster with too little critical examination.

The Problematics of Outsider/Within

Even being *within*, though less problematic than *outsider*, is no straightforward, unadulterated experience from day to day for most members of an organization. *Insiders* are internally differentiated so that some members stand much closer to or even within the inner circle that oversees the organization, while other members – custodial or groundskeeping employees, for instance – barely enjoy the benefits of full membership, even if they happen to be insider-group members. In everyday life, we see this when a person in the latter category gets asked, "Where do you work?" The answer, "At the university," typically brings the follow-up question, "What do you do there?" In turn, just about any blue-collar response elicits a flat, "Oh." Between the blue-collar employees and the faculty and administrative employees stand many white-collar workers

whose insiderhood is liminal, typically involving some position between the centers of formal power and the lower rungs of a university's power structure. As Nancy Naples (1996) puts it, "the insider/outsider distinction masks...power differentials and experiential differentials..." (p. 84).

What concerns us here is not more or less clear-cut insiders but those members who experience themselves and may also be seen as *outsiders* within an organization. Both theoretically and politically, outsiderhood – not unlike sisterhood (McCluskey, 1994) – needs complicating so as to make use of the past several decades of research on intersectionality and the matrix of domination. Above all, we dare not exaggerate how outside some persons are by virtue of their positioning on only one social hierarchy. As Hancock (2007) reminds us, for example, "Obama and Clinton are both 'mainstream' candidates in the sense that they are well funded and supported by major players in one of the two major political parties." Moreover, "painting either as solely 'black' or 'female' limits their perceived substantive representational power" (p. 250). All the while, Obama's biracial status routinely gets erased.

Besides delineating a non-dualistic approach to being an outsider, we explore five senses that together may give this phenomenon its full meaning. Specifically, we look at what it means to be an outsider structurally, culturally, phenomenologically, interactionally, and performatively. This effort revolves around a proposition much emphasized among scholars of intersectionality, namely, that each "category of difference" comprises considerable internal diversity (Hancock, 2007), or "no social group is homogeneous" (Simien, 2007). Meanwhile outsiderhood continues getting attention, mostly in terms of race, gender, and social class, even among scholars of intersectionality (see Simien, 2007, for instance). For the most part, sexuality, disability, and age get sporadic, unsystematic attention.

Structure, Culture, and the Phenomenology of Being an Outsider

As we touched upon above, the centers of power in a formal organization are precisely that. Power is scarcely distributed evenly, let alone independently of members' demographic and cultural characteristics. Instead, it is more or less centralized, with full-time executives, administrators, and high-level managers monopolizing virtually all of the formal power routinely available in an organization. This is not to say that informal power and even the *underlife* (Goffman, 1961) of an organization are insignificant. Yet the psychological and social advantages that derive from formal power are considerable enough to make a monopoly on it by far the most efficient, reliable pathway to the outcomes members typically seek in formal organizations or even denigrated as *feminine* or *touchy-feely*.

So far we state no more than the obvious. Somewhat obvious as well is that structure and culture are intertwined notions, analytically separable, but practically inseparable in formal organizations. Just as individuals' agency and social structure complexly connect, so do an organization's formal structure and dominant culture. Extremely centralized, rigidly hierarchical organizations, for example, tend to exhibit competitive cultures where values such as teamwork, caring, and open communication are weak.

When individuals from subordinate groups join organizations that majority-group members control, they tend thus to join organizations where their groups' cultures are as peripheral as many of them feel. They may experience some degree of culture shock or cultural displacement. As Dorothy Smith (1990) theorizes, they typically experience *bifurcated consciousness*, a mode of experiencing not unlike W.E.B. Du Bois's (1903) *double consciousness*. Such experiencing means that outsiders within the organization tend to be *on* in dramaturgical terms; that is, they often try to manage the impressions they make in intentional, even self-conscious, ways (Goffman, 1959). Put differently, within the confines of the organization outsiders often feel uneasy, uncomfortable, or vulnerable. At best, they frequently feel guarded.

Gloria Ladson-Billings's recent study of seven African American professors of teacher education, which includes accounts of her own experiences, is illustrative. Ladson-Billings (2005, p. xi) labels these educators *outsiders within*. Summarizing the themes she gleaned from their accounts, Ladson-Billings concludes that "African Americans in the academy recognize that they exist in a kind of 'in-between' world between the power and privilege of the social order and the oppression and degradation of their racial group" (p. 8). Geneva Gay, one of these professors, mentions "just being at attention all the time." She goes on, "I'm always on stage. [It's as if] I'm always on stage, as if – let's say we are in a theater where my white colleagues [are] the audience" (p. 93). Sometimes in their work, then, these professors feel like "something of a curiosity" (p. 107).

Yet as Collins (1986; 1991; 1998) emphasizes, social hierarchies are interlocking systems that reinforce one another. So no outsider can occupy that status entirely, either structurally (to state the obvious anew) or culturally. To wit, virtually every person holds a relatively advantageous position on one or more social hierarchies. Thus, a heterosexual male of color may be more or less comfortable with the heterosexist parts of an organization's culture. Similarly, a professional woman of

color may feel comfortable with the solidly middle-class values and norms that predominate in an organization, just as a young lesbian of any racial/ethnic group may be comfortable with the organization's ageism.

Few, if any, members of an organization are thus outsiders in any full-fledged or meaningful sense (Merton, 1972). To claim that some members are is to oversimplify the dynamics of social hierarchies, the complexity of lived experiences, and the identities they shape. In effect, oppression and privilege interplay in a dialectic that leaves nearly all members open to experiences of being an outsider, at least occasionally. Although some members are substantially and systemically vulnerable to frequent experiences of that sort, they have no monopoly on the lived experience itself. Instead, their experiences epitomize what most other members also experience firsthand, albeit much less frequently and much less dramatically.

Let us return for a moment to the outsiders within in Ladson-Billings's study. Early in her report, Ladson-Billings (2005) tells about meeting with a former classmate from her graduate school days at Stanford University. The point of the story is Ladson-Billings's surprise when a former classmate calls her a "superstar." Later Ladson-Billings unabashedly announces how she got invited to interview at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, where she is currently the Kellner Family Professor of Urban Education. Carl Grant, another of the participants in her study, told her, "You have *got* to come to Wisconsin . . . I have a stack of resumes on my desk, and I will push them all off to get you to Madison." So said this outsider/within, this "icon of multicultural education scholarship" (p. 48). It comes as little surprise, then, that Ladson-Billings has been "struck by the notion of sponsorship and the role it played" in her career. No stranger to *sponsored mobility* (p. 31), she offers an account of her own experiences that is much more nuanced than that of an unadulterated outsider/within.

Yet her own and these other professors' experiences do match up with what Collins (1991) had in mind with this concept about marginality. Perhaps one preliminary inference to consider, one strongly implied in the literature, is that members are consistently more aware of their oppression than of their privilege. As Sandra Lee Bartky (1990) theorizes, oppression has an experiential dimension that pierces consciousness as a chronic source of pain, uneasiness, or self-consciousness. In general, then, "oppression shapes lived identities more than privilege does" (Rogers, 1998, p. 374). Put differently, privilege goes unmarked (Brekhus, 1998). Its institutionalization normalizes it, thus rendering it a more or less taken-for-granted status such as heterosexual or male.

In phenomenological terms, then, over time, members' lived experiences inescapably reflect their various positions on such hierarchies as age, gender, race, sexuality, and social class. Further, the informal as well as the formal structures of an organization shape members' lived experiences in ways that both reflect and perpetuate the aforementioned hierarchies. Thus, the informal and formal *systems of relevances* (Schutz, 1970) that predominate in the organization are, in part, expressions of the hierarchies that members variously occupy. No matter how much diversity training and related programs are offered in the way of secondary socialization (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), members inevitably express and experience their hierarchical positionings as they go about the business of the organization.

All the while, however, members remain agents capable of shaping the degree and frequency of their experiences of being outsiders. They can and do develop social networks capable of offsetting or circumnavigating some of the biases they encounter in the organization's formalities – its standardized procedures, its official rules, its chain of command. We have heard, for example, of instances where only minority-group faculty members are deemed eligible for travel support to attend the annual meeting of the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE), not because they are officially proscribed from getting such support, but because the minority-group employees controlling that process informally and implicitly agree on that racialized restriction. Such *secondary adjustments* (Goffman, 1961) are, as we will soon see, the underside of discriminatory systems of distributing work, rewards, and respect.

The agency of some outsiders/within is also heightened by their formal status in the organization, as Grant's sponsorship of Ladson-Billings illustrates. The higher they are in the organization's formal structure, the greater their capacity to curtail the degree and frequency of their lived experiences as outsiders/within. Yet their agency need not be oriented toward that outcome. So we now explore how members' interactive and performative capacities tend to find diverse expressions within a formal organization's confines.

Social Interaction and the Outsider

Feminist, postmodernist, and queer theorists have all helped to renew attention to individuals' agency and voice. Emphasizing that structures enable as well as constrain individuals, such theorists tend to emphasize the ongoing ways members' actions and interactions help to maintain or change the structures that embed them.

Although the notions of social interaction and performativity are theoretically intertwined, the two concepts address different parts of the social world as well as different parts of individuals' personal and interpersonal lives. Social interaction, whether considered in symbolic interactionist (Maines, 2001) or social constructionist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) terms, entails sufficient mutuality to ensure communication that generally meets the organization's criteria of effectiveness. Whether verbal or not, interaction is inevitable when two or more people encounter one another, even in fleeting ways. As Goffman (1966, p. 35) tells us, "In the presence of another…we cannot say nothing."

Social scientists' primary interest in interaction, however, concerns recurrent verbal and nonverbal communications that establish relationships between individuals. Such social interaction eventuates from social roles, such as friend, coworker, teammate, or boss. In formal organizations, members' interactions largely reflect their formal as well as their informal positions in the organization. Routinely, if only by definition, members' interactions reinforce rather than challenge the formal structure of the organization embedding them. Yet, as Goffman (1963) reminds us, every formal organization gives way to an underlife where members challenge or even deviate from standard operating procedures. Especially for underlings, the underlife of an organization provides secondary adjustments whereby they garner rewards and benefits from the system that they have no formal right to expect.

The very concept of secondary adjustments points to members' agency and voice that cannot be wholly squelched even in the lowest reaches of the organization. Goffman's own work illustrates how outsiders/within can to some extent counteract their experiences of being outsiders. Especially in teamwork with other outsiders, they can collaborate as insiders and even get some of the perquisites often denied them, both formally and informally. In *Asylums*, for instance, Goffman (1961) shows how mentally ill patients work the system so as to make it less rigid an "iron home" (p. xiv). As they do so, they would seem incapable of feeling like mere outsiders in the mental hospital where they live.

At the university where one of us teaches, we have seen examples of such collaboration in the underlife of the organization. Custodial workers seem to have the most efficient information network on campus, and they routinely help one another enjoy the treasures they find among higher-status employees' trash. Their innocuous, resourceful conniving is a matter of pride to some of them. Connie (pseudonym) says, "When I gets done cleaning, I almost always has more than a clean building." She laughs.

Surely, then, outsider–group members of the faculty are capable of the same sorts of actions and interactions. Sometimes they collectively formalize that capacity as a Black Employees Association or a Latino/a Alliance. Here, though, we focus on examples from Ladson-Billings's study because it adopts outsider/within as a definitive dimension of its participants' professional experiences at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

For starters, at least one of the professors participating in Ladson-Billings's (2005) study got a MacArthur Fellowship, one of the lucrative awards several dozen people get each year for up to five years. Typically, each of the participants acknowledges the substantial help of mentors in their professional lives. Although some of their mentors formally had that responsibility, most of the mentoring the participants acknowledge came to them informally and sometimes eventuated in relationships that extended themselves into broader networks. Cherry A. McGee Banks says of the PWI Seattle University:

> I'd say almost the entire faculty served as mentors. It was a wonderful place to begin my teaching in higher education….It was also a very caring and supportive environment and a lot of positive things were going on there. There was a particular person who was identified as my mentor, but it was really more of a whole department kind of thing. (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 123)

At times, Ladson-Billings herself offers comments that dilute the practical meaning of outsiders/within or, at least, add substantial weight to the *within* factor of that ratio:

> All of the participants were able to identify differences [from their white colleagues' professional experiences], but none regarded the differences as so burdensome that they impeded their career trajectories. Indeed, this project is comprised of scholars who are exceptionally successful. They have name recognition and stature in the field. (pp. 92-93)

Then, too, Ladson-Billings's portrayals point to solid middle-class backgrounds among some of the participants, but their class privilege gets no more attention than their gender privilege or their able-bodied privilege. That circumstance would be understandable as well as logically acceptable, were Ladson-Billings only interested in the participants' lived experiences of marginality in higher education. Having labeled them outsiders/within, though, Ladson-Billings needs to take into account the social privileging undergirding their *within* alongside the social disprivileging undergirding their *outside*. Take William Tate, for instance. One of his father's friends had a Ph.D. from Ohio State University, and Tate

himself "is a second-generation college graduate (his mother and father both are college graduates)…" (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 111). Perhaps paradoxically, Tate calls African American professors of education *insider outsiders* (p. 109). Paradox or not, outsider/within continues seeming like an unduly simple way of labeling academicians who have graduated from and are teaching at major research universities.

Performativity and the Outsider

Thanks in large measure to Judith Butler's (1999) work, social theorists commonly assume by now that identity is a process we do, not an achievement we establish at some point or another along our developmental trajectories. Identity is, in other terms, *performative*. We do it daily, whether consciously or not, in the interstices of our mundane routines, interactions, and projects. Goffman's earlier work (1959; 1963; 1974) suggests and illustrates much the same principle, though in different terms and with different foci.

Those who identify themselves as outsiders or outsiders/within may, then, have adopted styles of interacting that elicit reactions likely to reinforce their sense of themselves as outsiders or outsiders/within. One fairly obvious way this could happen is to socialize mostly with members of one's outsider group. If most of the colleagues a professor goes to lunch with are members of her own racial/ethnic minority group, that educator may be reinforcing her experiences of outsiderhood. In fact, one colleague often, if not typically, introduces into conversation her minority status at the university and how it affects her experiences and outcomes. Without doubting her sincerity or the weight of her pain, we have seen how these sorts of comments by now come across to some associates and friends as scripted – indeed, habitual – remarks. While much of their impact seems to have been compromised by their frequency, these sorts of comments may nevertheless bolster this colleague's sense of being an outsider within our university.

Habitually typifying self in *any* way tends, as Butler (1999) has powerfully shown, to render that part of one's identity a regulatory mechanism whereby we impose expectations and controls on ourselves. Butler focuses on gender to make her point. The more one thinks of oneself as feminine or masculine, the more one tends to enact those cultural mandates associated with that identity claim. Similarly, the more one thinks of oneself as an outsider/within, the more a person might tend to enact those realities associated with outsiderhood within a given organization. Here we are not implying a self-fulfilling prophesy (Merton, 1949) in which a person's expectations increase or decrease the likelihood of a given event or outcome. Instead, we are trying to get at how our identities within specific social contexts regulate our behavior, which in turn elicits some reactions more than others. With habitually self-defined outsiders, what we might call (in non-postmodernist terms) their *identity enactments* gear their interactions toward the sorts of content associated with being an outsider *regardless of whether or not they expect to be treated that way*.

The Hidden Injuries of Outsider/Within

Outsider/within has proven useful mostly as a concept pointing to some members' lived experiences of marginality or incomplete membership. Used more broadly, though, the concept is not helpful. Throughout this exploration we have seen time and again that both "[i]n lived experience and political practice, certain identity categories overrule, capture, differentiate, and transgress others…" so as to guarantee some substantial peripherality or even exclusion or outsiderhood for members of some social categories. Overall, though, both theory and empirical research underscore the need "to read these categories simultaneously" (Simien, p. 270). When in scholarly or everyday circles we fail to do that, *outsider/within* is worse than lacking in practical utility: It can be divisive. Let us look first at its divisive potential in everyday life, specifically at how such thinking reinforces or exacerbates a *divided self* for its habitual user.

In *The Hidden Injuries of Class,* Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972) argue that a self divided into a *real self* and a *performing self* is a defense against public indignities of various sorts, including the indignity of being ignored, put down, or treated dismissively. Alienation can thus be defensive and self-protective. People "can practice alienation" (Sennett & Cobb, p. 215) so as to lessen their pain. That way they are less likely to be "overwhelmed as a whole" (p. 214). Yet "the arrangements consciousness makes in response to an environment where respect is not forthcoming as a matter of course" fail in the end. Dividing the self "does not remove the conditions that made a defense necessary in the first place" (p. 219). Paradoxically, struggling against those conditions may stand some chance of changing them while *also* rendering the outsider/within a person who is *in* the organization but not *of* it. In other terms, some members can be *in/outsiders*.

Such members acknowledge that they are inside the organization while refusing to become full-fledged – and thus, relatively uncritical – members. These members valorize their capacity to stand somewhat outside and resist the organization's normalized expectations. They see their organizational identity much as Maxine Scates (1995) sees her working-class identity, that is, based "on negation, an absence" (p. 187). This sort of organizational identity is capable of

making psychological and social space for struggle. For these members, struggle becomes a profound "survival tool" (Joseph, 1995, p. 136), the means for resolving the ongoing dialectic between their outsider status and their success in the insider-controlled world.

Before turning to how such an identity finds at least partial expression in some contemporary multiculturalism, let us acknowledge the limited, short-term rewards of habitually identifying as an outsider within the organization where a person works. A member can, as we have seen, accrue secondary gains by enacting the very identity that some other members expect her to have. Yet those gains are, as Goffman (1961) underscored with his choice of phrases, decidedly secondary, though not unimportant. The better gains perhaps lie with feisty insiderhood. Let us now look at how these two broadly defined perspectives – outsider/within and in/outsider – find expression among multicultural theorists.

Varieties of Multiculturalism

Just as some employees and some theorists focus on the experiences of racial/ethnic minorities as outsiders/within, some multiculturalists focus their attention along that same pathway. They give the lion's share of their attention to race and ethnicity at the expense of social class, gender, sexuality, and other social hierarchies. James Banks, commonly cited as the contemporary originator of the most widely applied versions of multiculturalism, exemplifies what we might call *outsider/within multiculturalism*. So does Gloria Ladson-Billings, whose recent work we have considered briefly here.

For Banks (2004), multiculturalism is largely a response to ethnic and racial groups' concerns about marginalization. Yet culture, the shared attitudes, beliefs, and values of a social group (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), extends beyond race and ethnicity. It also finds expression in the hierarchies of gender, sexuality, social class, and age, for example. Banks's (2004) efforts have been enormously influential but unduly narrow. In his and his successors' hands, multiculturalism has often reinforced the insider/outsider dualism.

Ladson-Billings (1994), who largely adopts Banks's multiculturalist model, is best known for her qualitative study *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Students*. There she looks in detail at how eight such teachers – five black, three white – work to great effect with their students. Based in part on her 1984 doctoral dissertation, *The Dreamkeepers* is a powerful rendering of the culturally relevant teaching that these professionals all practice. Yet this study includes no substantial attention to social class, gender, learning or other disabilities, sexual identity, or age. In postmodernist terms, it tends to totalize African American students as if they are somehow fundamentally all the same, at least as students within white-controlled school districts. The book opens with this sentence, for example: "No challenge has been more daunting than that of improving the academic achievement of African American students" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. ix).

This study illustrates the variety of multiculturalism Banks advocates, which is now institutionalized in much K-12 public schooling. As we have seen, it is largely a race-centered multiculturalism. One measure of its centrality to Ladson-Billings's study is the absence of references to critical multiculturalists in her work. Granted, this study originated in the early 1980s before critical multiculturalism was fully in evidence. Yet Ladson-Billings (1994, p. 16) does mention Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, whom she labels "critical theorists." Indeed, they are that, but by the early 1990s when Ladson-Billings's book was being prepared for publication, both theorists had done considerable work as critical multiculturalists. Yet, their work along those lines goes unacknowledged in her book.

In fairly sharp contrast to Banks's and Ladson-Billings' work stands *in/outsider multiculturalism* that emphasizes diverse bases for experiencing outsiderhood. While its progenitors scarcely deny whatever experiences of outsiderhood they may have had, they are more inclined than outsider/within multiculturalists to acknowledge their privilege on some social hierarchies, while emphasizing that neither race nor any other social hierarchy is the single most important basis of outsiderhood. Instead, in various social settings (including formal organizations), subordination typically rests on multiple grounds. Among these in/outsider multiculturalists, more commonly identified as *critical multiculturalists*, two of our favorites are bell hooks and Michael Eric Dyson. Unlike less radical multiculturalists, these theorists often write from postmodernist, feminist perspectives that sometimes serve as a measure of their resistance as in/outsiders. Unlike most critical multiculturalists, however, neither hooks nor Dyson is explicitly identified with the Frankfurt School or critical theory. Yet their theorizing runs along the same channels used by Giroux (1992), McLaren and Farahmandpur (2004), Christine Sleeter (2001), and other critical multiculturalists.

Dyson's theorizing, including his cultural critiques, sharply contrast with Ladson-Billings's and Banks's work. The essays in *The Michael Eric Dyson Reader* (2004) gains coherence from his ambitious as well as critical multiculturalism. Dyson consistently includes gender, social class, age, and sexuality in his discussions of such matters as homophobia in the black

church, Michael Jackson's spirituality, so-called *whitewishing*, and a "theology of homoeroticism" (p. 236). Himself a former preacher, Dyson is as daring as he is rigorous in his formulations. He does invoke academicians such as John Rawls, but his more frequent invocations go to public intellectuals such as Todd Gitlin, Cornel West, and bell hooks. Then, too, Dyson is given to colorful neologisms that carry critical weight difficult to achieve with concepts like outsider/within, institutionalized racism, or intersectionality. Whitewishing is but one example of a wide array that also includes racequake (p. 57) and bibliolatry (p. 245).

Dyson's hermeneutic stance illustrates his commitment to a radically inclusive perspective that functions as an energetic, even unsurpassed, critical multiculturalism. Dyson (2004) defines a *political hermeneutic*, for instance, as "the horizon of interpretation…always shaded by the social order in which readers and hearers discover themselves" (p. 241). For us, his emphasis on self-discovery implies the most precious purpose of reading and learning, namely, the renewal or extension of one's self-knowledge and thus of one's agency. That, it would seem, is among the core purposes of the critical multiculturalism Dyson exemplifies.

Like Dyson, hooks often draws from her own experiences as an educator and culture critic in order to theorize a distinctive and critical multiculturalism. Her pedagogy, which is feminist as well as critical, embraces the presence of each person. Listening to each person's voice is, for hooks, a profound act of recognition. We like to invoke hooks's ideas about engaged pedagogy to describe how we think about multiculturalism. Both "must constantly be changed, invented, reconceptualized to address each new teaching experience" or social setting (hooks, 1984, p. 10). For her, education is like identity. It "is a performative act. And it is that aspect…that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements…" (p. 11). From her perspectives, labels such as *insider/outsider* take insufficient account of the fluidity of identity as well as the multiplicity of oppression.

For hooks, building and sustaining communities, whether through professional or civic endeavors, creates the climate of openness and commonality capable of sustaining struggle while instantiating inclusiveness. Affirming diversity moves us from the status quo toward the field of knowledge, where we all need to labor. From hooks's standpoint, outsiderhood amounts to complacency; affirmation of differences is praxis.

Conclusion

It seems to us that *outsider/within* and its concomitant vocabulary fail to augment the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) of people in everyday life, while also stymieing efforts to move past modernist rhetoric toward a postmodernist outlook that is more fluid and more complex. "Outsider/within" carries too much weight from the past when dualisms trumped continua, and grand narratives (Baudrillard, 1998) were stories whose protagonists were uniformly male as well as white, heterosexual, materially well off, and able-bodied. We need a new vocabulary deriving from efforts like those of hooks, Dyson, and other critical multiculturalists. This vocabulary might best come from postmodernism and postcolonialism. Such an updated, reinvigorated vocabulary could offer a foundation for a lively *postmodernist multiculturalism*.

This 21st-century multiculturalism takes the subaltern (Winant, 1990) as its focus. In particular, subaltern voices get heard in all their narrative variety within postmodernist multiculturalism. The subaltern is, to be sure, a subordinated, oppressed individual or group. At any historical moment under any given sociopolitical circumstances, though, the race, gender, age, sexuality, and other parts of the subaltern's identity and social positioning are variable, though in no way random. The subaltern is a political, cultural, and psychological product of colonization, including its intranational as well as international varieties.

Subalterns thus eventuate from domination. They are ongoing cultural and political reminders that no one version of any given story is the sole channel of truth or credibility. By definition, subalterns are those individual or group members of a community or society whose stories get ignored, distorted, trivialized, or even vilified. Theirs are the stories central to any understanding of what it means to feel like an outsider. Theirs are also the stories central to any understanding of the multiplicity of identities and social positionings within any subordinated, marginalized, or excluded group.

Focusing on subalterns instead of gender, race, sexuality, social class, age, or other hierarchies puts us in a position to ask time and time again, *Which* girls and women? *Which* African Americans? *Which* bisexuals? *Which* people on a fixed income? In our classrooms and in our civic engagements, these are the pressing questions that typically need asking. These questions lie at the core of a postmodernist multiculturalism centering on subalterns. With that center provisionally established, educators and citizens as well as scholars might begin moving onto the terrain where lived experiences of social inequalities have their complexity. There we can also begin moving toward a refined vocabulary for talking about social justice and human suffering.

References

Banks, J. (2004). Teaching for social justice, diversity, and citizenship in a global world. *The Educational Forum,* 68(4), 296.

Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression.* New York: Routledge.

Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The consumer society: Myths and structures.* (C. Turner, Trans.).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Original work published 1998).

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* New York: Anchor Books.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Brekhus, W. (1998). Sociology of the unmarked: Redirecting our focus. *Sociological Theory*, 16(1), 34-51.

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity.* New York: Routledge.

Collins, P. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought. *Social Problems*, 33(6), S14.

Collins, P. (1991). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment.* New York: Routledge.

Collins, P. (1998). Intersections of race, gender, and nation: Some indications for Black family studies. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies,* 29(1), 27-37.

Collins, P. (1999). Reflections on the outsider within. *Journal of Career Development,* 26(1), 85-89.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). *The souls of Black folk: Essays and sketches.* Chicago: A.G. McClurg.

Dyson, M. E. (2004). *The Michael Eric Dyson reader.* New York: Basic Civitas Books.

Giroux, H. A. (1992). *Border crossings: Cultural workers and the politics of education.* New York: Routledge.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates.* New York: Anchor Books.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Goffman, E. (1966). *Behavior in public places: Notes on the social organization of gatherings.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hancock, A. (2007). Intersectionality as a normative and empirical paradigm. *Politics & Gender,* 3(2), 248-253.

hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center.* Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Joseph, D. (1995). Breaking through the sounds of silence. In J. Zandy (Ed.), *Liberating memory: Our work and our working-class consciousness* (pp. 129-139). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Johnson, A. G. (2005). *Power, privilege and difference.* Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children.* San Francisco: Jossey-

Bass

Ladson-Billings, G. (2005). *Beyond the big house: African American educators on teacher education*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Maines, D. R. (2001). *The faultline of consciousness: A view of interactionism in sociology*. New York: A. de Gruyter.

McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 30(3), 1771-1800.*

McCluskey, A. T. (1994). Am I a woman and a sister? Reflections on the role of black women's studies in the academy. *Feminist Teacher, 8(3), 105.*

McLaren, P. & Farahmandpur, R. (2004). *Teaching against global capitalism and the new imperialism: A critical pedagogy.* Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Merton, R. K. (1949). *Social theory and social structure: Toward the codification of theory and research.* New York: Free Press.

Merton, R. K. (1972). *Varieties of political expression in sociology.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Naples, N. A. (1996). A feminist revisiting the insider/outsider debate: The "outsider phenomenon" in rural Iowa. *Qualitative Sociology,* 19(1), 83-106.

Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. *Signs*: 5(4): 631-660.

Rogers, M. F. (1998). Identity and selfhood. In M. F. Rogers (Ed.), *Contemporary feminist theory: A text reader* (pp. 364-376). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Scates, M. (1995). Leaving it all behind. In J. Zandy (Ed.), *Liberating memory: Our work and our working-class consciousness* (pp. 184-191). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Schutz, A. (1970). *Reflections on the problem of relevance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Sennett, R. & Cobb, J. (1972). *The hidden injuries of class.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Simien, E. (2007). Doing intersectionality research: From conceptual issues to practical examples. *Politics & Gender,* 3(2), 264-271.

Sleeter, C. E. (2001). *Culture, difference, and power*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Smith, D. (1990). *The conceptual practice of power: A feminist sociology of knowledge.* Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.

Winant, H. (1990). Gayatri Spivak on the politics of the subaltern: An interview by Howard Winant. *Socialist Review,* 20(3), 81-97.