ABSTRACT

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: BREAKING THE CYCLE OF HATE: A
                          PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
                          TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES AS
                          BOTH *OTHER* AND *OTHERER*

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In this phenomenological study I explore the lived experiences of five k-12 teachers around prejudice and discrimination, both in their lives and in the school context. My research question asks, What is the lived experience of teachers as both *other* and *otherer,* as target and perpetrator? Embedded in this larger question are two sub-questions: 1) What are the teachers' experiences participating in and mitigating *othering* in the classroom? and 2) In what manner do they understand the shaping of their prior experiences as they participate in and mitigate *othering* in the classroom? My research is grounded in the philosophical writings of Levinas and Derrida, and I rely on van Manen to guide me through the methodology of phenomenology.

I listen to the stories of teachers who share their personal experiences around *othering*, digging for meaning that contributes to my understanding of the process. In my preliminary conversations I explore the role of place and emotions in our relations with the *other*. The complexity of identity begins to unfold.

The five participants in my study share vivid experiences around *othering*. Through their stories I come to understand that our experiences around *othering* have

very much to do with our sense of self. My participants do not have consistent relationships with *others*. Their interactions seem very much influenced by their own identity development, their relationship to the *other*, and the strength of their memories.

In the school context, my participants experience *othering* from parents, students, and colleagues, and they, too, *other*, but they remain committed to challenging acts of bias in the school. They move beyond the self, reaching out to their students-as-*others*, forming relationships that transform the classroom from a place of learning to a place of living, seeing, and being seen.

Finally, from my participants' words, I draw implications for pre-service and in-service education programs, imagining how we can prepare teachers to reflect critically, thinking about their personal experiences around *othering* in ways that enable them to teach for transformation in their classrooms.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF HATE:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES

AS BOTH *OTHER* AND *OTHERER*

By

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DEDICATION

To my father, Wilfred Milofsky,

for setting me on the path of social justice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Walking the Walk—Talking the Talk

As an individual and as an anti-bias educator, I have come to question how it is that people can feel the sting of prejudice and discrimination and then subsequently inflict that pain on someone else. My personal experiences as *other* and *otherer* form my basic understanding of how it feels to live these notions. Thus, it is within these personal experiences that my journey walking on the road of social justice begins. I live these experiences; I walk in them and among them, learning the language of social justice that enables me to question what these experiences mean for our teaching.

Walking Alone as the Other

"Hello, Alison" was all he said as he walked by, patted me on the head and continued on his way to the other side of the executive offices. At that moment I felt humiliation and frustration. I sat silently shaking my head and smiling, hoping my colleagues would sense my disbelief at his actions, but at the same time praying no one had seen what he had done. My 50 year-old male colleague who was seated about four feet from me and was waiting with me to go into a meeting in the executive conference room commented as the president walked by, "What, I don't get a pat on the head?" The president smiled and continued walking, but when he returned he said, "Ok John, I'll pat you on the head, too," and as he passed me, he noted, "I just realized how sexist that was." Well, at least he had come to some level of realization. Unfortunately, he would never understand how much, on this second occasion of

patting me on the head in front of my colleagues, he had established me as an outsider, someone who was not at the same level as her colleagues for one reason or another. In this instance I was *othered*, made to feel different, less than, because of my identity. What does it mean to be *othered*? What does it mean to have the power to *other*? How does the experience of being an *other* resonate in future interactions with people who have social power that the *othered* does not?

Feminist theorist Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1993) writes, "The category of the *Other* is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality—that of the Self and the Other " (p. 368). The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas' (1989c) speaks of the *other* in terms that bend how we perceive difference: "The Other as Other is not only an alter ego: the Other is what I myself am not…The Other is, for example, the weak, the poor, 'the widow and the orphan', whereas I am the rich or the powerful" (p. 48). Levinas presents the *other* outside of negativity, as truly positive. While the *other* may be different from me, this difference is not bad; it is human.

The term *other* appears extensively in sociological discourses, including post-colonialism, post-modernism, and feminism. Postcolonial discourse reframes the relationship between the margin and the center: "The West and Otherness relate not as polarities or binarisms in postcolonial discourse but in ways in which both are complicitous and resistant, victim and accomplice…The Other is not merely the opposite of Western colonialism, nor is the West a homogenous trope of imperialism" (Giroux, 1992, p. 27).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) introduces the *other* as dominated by imperialism and colonialism: "As a cultural apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge" (p. 204). Said asks that we engage a critical consciousness in our exploration of an*other* culture. He questions the aim of dominant cultures in representing *others* and the process of knowledge construction: "Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the 'other')?… How do ideas acquire authority, 'normality,' and even the status of 'natural' truth?" (p. 326).

Woman, as *other,* is at the center of feminist theory and critique. De Beauvoir (1949/1993) writes of the position of woman as the *other*: "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being…He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other" (p. 367). Critical education theorists borrow widely from these and other discourses to construct pedagogies of opposition, transformation, and emancipation—pedagogies that connect educational struggles with broader social struggles for democratization and pluralization (Giroux, 1992).

The literature on power and difference uses several terms to denote relationships, including insider/outsider, dominant/subordinate, oppressor/oppressed, us/them, and margin/center. *Other,* target, and marginalized group are a few of the terms referring to those without power. While many of these terms appear throughout this study, I primarily use *other*, reflecting my focus on an individual rather than a systemic level. While *other, othering, and otherness* are named widely in the

literature on difference, there is no parallel term to refer to the person who *others.* In this study I name the individuals who distinguish themselves as belonging to "us" rather than "them," and I refer to them as *otherers.* My interest is in exploring the phenomenon of both *other* and *otherer,* as a way of dismantling the cycle that allows prejudice and discrimination to flourish. In this light, it is essential that I refer to those responsible for *othering*, instead of allowing them to remain nameless.

What is an *other*? An *other* is a person, or group of people, that is significantly different from "us"—"us" referring to the mainstream or majority, that which is considered "normal" in society. This anthropological definition is rooted in culture, which depends on things being ordered in classificatory systems. People are assigned to a place in the binary "us/them," marking their difference, as a way of giving meaning to things. Marking *others* allows a culture to tighten its borders and reject or expel that which it perceives as abnormal. Erikson (1966) expresses a similar notion:

> Deviant forms of behavior, by marking the outer edges of group life, give the inner structure its special character and thus supply the framework within which the people of the group develop an orderly sense of their own cultural identity. (p. 13)

> One of the surest ways to confirm an identity, for communities as well as for individuals, is to find some way of measuring what it is not. (p. 64)

But *othering*, the process of making one feel like an outsider, is not limited to the domain of culture. An individual can be *othered* based on any number of social identities.

The experience of being an outsider, an *other* is not new to me. I have experienced being an *other* because of my gender, ethnicity, age, and nationality. I

am sure there are additional ways of being an *other* that I have experienced but which are safely protected in the recesses of my memory. Regardless of the immutable characteristic that has served as the basis for me being an *other*, the feeling has been the same: isolation, separateness, inferiority, anger, frustration, and in some cases fear. What is perhaps most surprising, however, is that despite my experiences as an *other*, I, too, have looked at people who are different from me and *othered* them. I have sacrificed my concern for social justice to satisfy some need that I have yet to comprehend. But my social justice orientation has not entirely abandoned me in these difficult times. My way of wanting to be in the world has caused me to reflect on my actions and to question how they translate into the classroom where I teach. This questioning leads me to wonder how reflecting on experiences as *other* and *otherer* can shape teachers' interactions with their students.

Walking to the "Other" Side: Moving From Other *to* Otherer

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Slovak Republic I developed a hyper-awareness of the discrimination Roma, commonly known as Gypsies, faced on a daily basis. I spent the better part of two years talking to my students, colleagues, and acquaintances about Roma, questioning what I perceived to be their racist views. One day walking home from the university where I taught, I saw two Roma walking toward me on the sidewalk. As they approached, I clutched my bag, which contained my wallet, and pulled it closer to me (one of the most prevalent stereotypes about Roma is that they are thieves). As they passed, I felt tremendous shame. I immediately realized what I had done and felt an overwhelming sadness and disappointment in myself for having given in to the stereotypes I had heard about

Roma. As much as I had disputed these stereotypes in conversations with Slovaks and challenged their veracity, they had seeped into my brain and affected my actions. What did my shame signify? According to Levinas (1961/1969), my shame is a part of my moral consciousness in relation to the *other*. The justified existence of the *other* provokes my shame.

However, surely worse than what I had felt, were the feelings of the men I had encountered. I instantly wondered if they had seen my subtle gesture. If so, how did that impact them, their self-image, their self-worth? What message had my actions sent them? And what drove my reaction? Did I react as a woman, or as a *white* woman, who was frightened by the skin of the *other* and what that skin represented? Would I have reacted the same way if two white men had walked by me?

What is even more surprising is that my experience of *othering* these men occurred at a time in my life when I felt particularly vulnerable, when I felt the need to protect my identity. As a Jewish woman living in a town that had sent approximately 840 of 850 Jewish residents to Auschwitz (the remaining 10 survived by hiding in the mountains during the war), and teaching at a Catholic university, I felt out of place, and because of this, I felt the need to hide my Jewish identity. Growing up, I did not talk about being Jewish with friends, primarily because I was raised in a secular home and didn't know much, if anything at all, about Judaism or Jewish culture and tradition. But I found there to be a distinct difference between omitting my Jewish identity because it wasn't relevant in a conversation and consciously making an effort to keep my identity a secret, for reasons of personal security and perception by my Slovak community. Van Manen and Levering (1996)

note, "The experience of secrecy is always simultaneously an experience of self, of personal identity" (p. 100). They ask, "How is the self concealed or revealed in the practice of secrecy?" "What are the consequences for the formation of identity?" (p. 100). How was my "self" concealed and revealed in keeping this secret? For the most part, it was not difficult to hide my identity. But while my identity remained a secret to outsiders, something concealed, it became something that slowly revealed itself to me. This aspect of my identity became stronger and clearer. What was revealed to me was a level of pride in my heritage and a sense of belonging to a group that had experienced unimaginable atrocities for far longer than I could have imagined. As I lived behind a mask and hid my authentic self, my belonging became so strong it was almost palpable. And the stronger it became, the more I felt the need to protect it from those I perceived as unwilling to embrace it. Despite this growing awareness, however, I felt like an *other*, even though my identity remained hidden. How quickly I was able to move from *othered* to *otherer*.

How does one move from being an *other* to *otherer*? Is there no learning from the experience of being *othered* oneself? In *Outsiders in Urban Societies*, David Sibley (1981) suggests, "When a deprived group in the dominant society feels threatened by an outsider group, it will appeal to the collective interest [of the dominant group] in its expressions of antagonism" (p. 23). Historian Howard Zinn (2003) writes, "In the long run, the oppressor is also a victim. In the short run (and so far, human history has consisted only of short runs), the victims, themselves desperate and tainted with the culture that oppresses them, turn on other victims" (p. 10). One is never exclusively an *other* or an *otherer*.

As a Jewish woman hiding my Jewish identity, and as an American, I was both a visible and invisible outsider while working in Slovakia. When given the choice of showing solidarity with Roma or appealing to the collective interest, I sided with the collective. In that moment I ignored any empathy I felt, any common bond there may have been between us as *others*. To what extent did hiding my identity prevent me from expressing solidarity with Roma? How did masking my self prevent me from connecting with the visible *other?* When we cannot openly acknowledge and embrace who we are, are we less likely to unite with those who have a common experience for fear of publicly revealing our authentic self?

Madrid (2004) speaks of hiding one's identity as a way of escaping *othering*:

> For some of us being *the other* is only annoying; for others it is debilitating; for still others it is damning. Many try to flee otherness by taking on protective colorations that provide invisibility, whether of dress or speech or manner or name. Only a fortunate few succeed. For the majority, otherness is permanently sealed by physical appearance. For the rest, otherness is betrayed by ways of being, speaking or of doing. (p. 25)

I hid my Jewish identity in order to "pass" in a predominantly Catholic society. My identity remained invisible until I made the conscious choice to reveal it. I was one of the "fortunate" ones, benefiting from the privileges of the dominant group, though I did not belong.

But invisibility is not always a matter of choice. In some instances, individuals and communities are told to keep their identities hidden. Rich (1986) speaks of the consequences of such invisibility:

> Invisibility is a dangerous and painful condition…Invisibility is not just a matter of being told to keep your private life private; it's the attempt to fragment you, to prevent you from integrating love and work and feelings and ideas, with the empowerment that that can bring. (pp. 199-200)

Whether choosing to remain invisible or being forced into invisibility, the oppressor creates the conditions by which the *other* must live.

What does it mean to *other*? Why do societies have a need to *other*? Most modern countries are home to one or more outsider groups (McDermott, 1974). These groups are "actively rejected by the host population because of behavior or characteristics positively condemned" by the dominant group (Barthes, as cited in McDermott, p. 83). *Othering* involves having the power to make someone feel inferior and using that power to create distance and advantage. Tatum (2000) identifies the following categories of *otherness* in the U.S.: race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age and ability, among others. For each category, there is a dominant group, systematically advantaged by society, and a targeted group, disadvantaged by society. Audre Lorde cautions us, however, to be mindful of the tension between dominant and targeted groups within the same individual, "[Outsiders] often identify one way in which we are different, and we assume that to be the primary cause of all oppression, forgetting other distortions around difference, some of which we ourselves may be practicing" (as cited in Tatum, p. 11). Lorde captures the essence of this research study, which is to consider not only the ways in which we are targeted because of our difference but to contemplate "our complicity in the oppression of others" (Tatum, p. 14).

In my introductory experience, the president demonstrated his power as a male over me, a female. His thoughts became action, and through his action he communicated a strong message, perhaps intentional, perhaps not, that I did not belong, at least not in the same capacity as my male colleague(s). As a female, if I

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had patted him on the head in response to his action, the consequences would not have been the same. As a female, disadvantaged in terms of societal power, my biased actions toward a man do not have the same influence as a man's biased actions toward me. The distribution of power and privilege in society privileges men over women. Social structures are firmly in place that ensure my status as secondary to men. In my experience as an *otherer*, my actions demonstrated to the passersby that they were not welcome in my space/place. They had crossed a boundary by crossing my path and they belonged elsewhere, somewhere where I did not have to worry about the location of my wallet. My actions illustrated my power to communicate a silent message about the place these men hold in society. I was aware of the power I had which allowed me to eat where I wanted, get a job where I wanted, and live where I wanted in the town that those individuals had inhabited long before me.

Behind the process of *othering* or being *othered*, is prejudice. Prejudice comes from *prejudicium,* or injustice, and from the Latin *praejudicium*, or "prior judgment."[1] The biases that form our prejudices come from a range of sources, including the media, parents, religious leaders, teachers, and peers. From the time we are young children, we are exposed to these biases. Depending on the depth of these prejudices, they can manifest in discrimination, the transference of our prejudicial thoughts into action. But what if we could suspend prior judgment? What might our interaction with *others* look like?

Gadamer's (1975/2004) interpretation of prejudice, however, has a very different meaning, one that is not pejorative. For Gadamer, "'prejudice' certainly does

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, all etymologies come from the Online Etymology Dictionary, http://www.etymonline.com.

not mean a false judgment, but part of the idea is that it can have either a positive or a negative value" (p. 273). Our prejudices are our initial understandings, which help us to interrogate a topic. By uncovering our prejudices, we may be more open to the voice of the *other*, more willing to participate in authentic conversation as a means of gaining understanding.

My experiences as both *other* and *otherer* did not begin or end during my service in the Peace Corps, but a confluence of factors—experiencing both alienation and power as *other* and *otherer,* respectively, and teaching a group of students who openly shared their biases toward Roma—have made this period a pivotal time in my life. My experiences around *othering* left an indelible imprint on my memory, a scar that I frequently rub, reminding me of my call as an educator to combat prejudice and discrimination. The more I rub, the more I wonder how my experiences around *othering* shape my interactions with students in the classroom. As I begin to explore what *othering* means for educators, I try to uncover my prejudices, and in so doing, I look back to the path which led me to choose the long, difficult road of social justice.

"Awakening" My Interest: Coming to Social Justice

What is the reason for my concern about the *other*? How did I end up on this current life journey that has me consumed with social justice and a need to address prejudice and discrimination? Is it an awareness that my actions do not always correspond with my beliefs and a desire to understand why, or is it an awareness that my beliefs require deep reflection because of their contradictory nature at times? Gadamer (2001) writes, "Something awakens our interest—this is really what comes first!" (p. 50). As phenomenology requires, I continue to explore my past experiences,

my autobiography, to understand deeply what brings me to study *othering* and to give shape to my phenomenological questioning.

An Emerging Concern

When I was 23 years old I began my career as an educator. As a Master's student studying to be a teacher of English as a Second Language, I read Jonathon Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (1992) and was shocked by the description of Washington, DC schools. Growing up in a DC suburb, I had no idea there were such differences in opportunity nearby. I became unsettled. Kozol's (1992) examination of disparities in funding between poor and rich districts in several cities in the United States exposes a system of education in society that is dependent upon differences in race and class. How those in power feel about these differences is quite evident, and people of color, Kozol finds, are very aware of their status as *other*:

> If you're black you have to understand—white people would destroy their schools before they'd let our children sit beside their children. They would leave their homes and sell them for a song in order not to live with us and see our children socializing with their children. (p. 185)

How does students' awareness of discrimination influence their interactions with teachers whose backgrounds differ from their own? And how do teachers respond to these differences?

After reading *Savage Inequalities* and later Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000), I came to view societal inequity as inseparable from education. Thus, when I reflect on my experiences as both *other* and *otherer,* it is always with a sense that these experiences, these reflections, influence my teaching. In Slovakia, the question became one of representing a group that was not present in

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the classroom but was present in terms of the attitudes and actions of society. How did my reflections allow me to talk about Roma in ways that would challenge students' beliefs? I remember the pride I felt after two-and-a-half years, when a student responded to negative comments from her peers about Roma with, "But they have a different culture." Her response illuminated the complexity of the conversation, that if we think "They should act like us" we deny them their identity, their way of being in the world.

My reflections lead me to wonder how I came to this place. I can trace my pivotal life experiences, but I have to believe my concern about social justice runs deeper. Am I hardwired to search for justice? Several years ago I was listening to hip hop music with my friend Tom who mentioned that when he was in high school he never would have listened to such music. He would have looked down on it as Black music, something beneath him. He had apparently grown older and learned that his prejudice was wrong. I didn't accept this explanation. So, I asked another friend, Ken, what he thought about the subject. He relayed a time when he was about 10 years old hearing his father refer to someone as a N---- and knowing instinctively that this was wrong. How is it that Ken knew in his heart that bias is wrong, even when the source of prejudice was the home? Isn't prejudice learned in part at home? Were there other messages he heard that resonated more strongly for him? Ken could not provide me with answers. He wasn't able to explain what led him to cringe when his father used an expletive, so clearly illustrating his hatred for a group of people. His experience leads me to question further how some come to combat prejudice more readily than others.

Recently I discovered a letter that my father had written to a politician. My father, who passed away in 1994 when I was 24 years old, was a negligence lawyer. He met a local politician in the building where he worked and sent this politician a letter in the 1980's regarding the Dukakis campaign. My father made the case that Dukakis needed an education agenda that mandated education on combating prejudice for all students from kindergarten onward. He wrote this letter when I was in high school, thinking I would study neuropsychology or perhaps law. The teaching profession would not enter my thoughts for eight more years. Though I was getting a Master's in education when my father passed, we never spoke in depth about education. What would he think about my experiences in the Peace Corps? How would he respond to my current work as an anti-bias educator? How did a man who was a negligence lawyer draft an education platform? I find it difficult to believe that my work developing anti-bias curricula and facilitating workshops is just a coincidence. What led me down this very specific path that my father wrote about more than twenty years ago? I will never have answers to my questions, but I will always have a sense of rightness about the work that I do, that this is the right path for me, that this is what I was meant to do. But still, I question whether I have been hardwired for this work or whether I was nurtured into this place.

What has sensitized me to the *other*? Is it my experiences being *othered* because I am Jewish? Wherever I turn, I find anti-Semitism—in academia, in my professional world, in my travels. When selecting a Peace Corps placement, I had been advised not to select Poland because of the negative experiences of some Jewish volunteers. Anti-Semitism was a factor in my decision of where to go and a factor in

my decision to hide my Jewish identity. On more than one occasion in Slovakia anti-Semitism reared its ugly head. In one situation, a young man started telling anti-Semitic jokes. We had a brief conversation about his opinions and he mentioned the very old canard that Jews control the world. "All international leaders are Jewish," he claimed. "John Major in England, Vaclav Havel in the Czech Republic, they're both Jewish." I was surprised by this and did some research finding that neither is in fact Jewish. Why would he claim something that isn't true? It was in his best interest to believe that they are Jewish, regardless of his opinion of their politics, because it supported his greater belief that Jews control the world. This belief is essential in providing evidence that Jews are the *other* and maintaining their status as such.

I had a similar experience with a young man from Nigeria whom I met in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. At some point our conversation turned to world events and he claimed, as had my Slovak acquaintance, that Jews control world finances and media. When I questioned him on this, he said it's a proven fact. But what are these facts, where do they come from, what is their basis? How does adhering to misinformation shape how we view and interact with our students who are the subject of such fallacies? And perhaps more importantly, how does this information shape how students identify with and perform in school? Steele (2004) posits that when subordinate groups, who have a strong identification with school, fear being stereotyped, their academic performance suffers. Termed "stereotype threat," this notion can affect any group about which there exists a stereotype. Stereotype threat does not stem from the internalization of stereotypes; rather, it derives from a strong identification with school and a concern about being

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stereotyped in this space. Ongoing stereotype threat can result in disidentification

from school and can undermine motivation (Steele, 2004). The mere existence of

stereotypes shapes how students and teachers interact with one an*other*.

Getting Lost: Matter out of Place

What is the role of place in the process of *othering*? When one is made to feel

different in a way that is unacceptable or unwanted in society, that individual feels

out of place. The power of *othering* lies in the capacity to make an*other* feel

unwelcome or in the wrong place. "Go back to where you came from" signifies that

individuals are in the wrong place and must return to where they belong, where there

are similar people. Power lies in the ability to create anxiety within those who feel out

of place, for if they felt as if they were in the right place, *othering* would not be

possible. Power struggles over identity would not exist. "Isms" would just be words

instead of concepts that communicate power and privilege of one group over an*other*.

Casey (1993) writes:

> While we easily imagine or project an ideal (or merely a better) place-
> to-be and remember a number of good places we have been, we find
> that the very idea, even the bare image, of no-place-at-all occasions the
> deepest anxiety. (p. ix)

According to Casey, place has the power to "direct and stabilize us, to memorialize

and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are* (as well as

where we are *not*)" (p. xv). How does place identify us? How do we know *who* we

are in terms of where we are, or rather *who* we are not? As an American in Slovakia I

was out of place. When I was followed around grocery stores because I was a

foreigner, I was made to feel like the *other*. Being in a place that I could not call

home meant I was never in a position of power, except when confronted with Roma

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who were even more out of place than I. The rampant discrimination of Roma meant they were strangers in their own land. Even when they were home, they were out of place. Hall (1997) writes, "Stable cultures require things stay in their appointed place. Symbolic boundaries keep the categories 'pure', giving cultures their unique meaning and identity" (p. 236). When *others* attempt to change their location, their place, society responds. When "matter is out of place" societies work to reestablish order by getting rid of the "matter," in an attempt to restore the "normal" state of things (Douglas, as cited in Hall, 1997).

When I hear anti-Semitic remarks, I automatically sense that I have been positioned as "matter out of place," and I interpret the remarks as an attempt to clarify that I do not belong. I feel unwelcome, unsafe. I wonder if there are allies nearby. I am reminded of an experience I had in a class I attended with a Jewish friend. At the end of one class the professor explained an incident related to education and used language that both my friend and I felt was very negative toward Jews. We communicated volumes in nonverbal communication to one another, each of us prodding the other to address the situation. But prior to either of us raising questions about the language the professor had used, the student sitting on the other side of my friend whispered to her, "If I were Jewish, I would find that very offensive." Still today, the student's statement is harder for me to understand than the sentiments expressed in the professor's choice of language. Why didn't this student feel offended as a non-Jew? Do I not find racist jokes offensive because I am white? Do I not address them because they do not directly relate to my identity? I may be white, but as a social justice advocate can I separate myself from a racist joke? How can I

separate myself from any representation of hate or inhumanity that I see or hear? I may not always choose to respond because of my personality or the level of safety I perceive in a given situation, but I am always clear about what offends me. And what offends me need not have anything to do with my identity. Should it always be up to the Jewish students to raise concerns about anti-Semitism? In this question, I can easily replace "Jewish" and "anti-Semitism" with any identity and "ism" and be as equally perplexed. At my core I believe that as a society we cannot progress until we reach a point where we can respond to the hate that *others* experience as if it were directed toward us and our own identity. By doing so, we can work to ensure that place is determined by where individuals choose to be as opposed to where they are told they can be. As an educator I must ask: How do teachers ensure that all students have a place in the classroom, in the school? What is the consequence for our students when they feel out of place or become "matter out of place?"

As I trace my path to social justice, memory plays a powerful role. My memories remind me of past experiences. How I think about these memories, what I choose to do with them, guides me toward social justice.

Remembering the Journey to the Present: Moments of Critical Reflection

> Memory must be formed; for memory is not memory for anything and everything. One has a memory for some things, and not for others; one wants to preserve one thing in memory and banish another. (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 14)

> Only by forgetting does the mind have the possibility of total renewal, the capacity to see everything with fresh eyes, so that what is long familiar fuses with the new into a many leveled unity. (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 14)

What is the place of remembering and forgetting in the cycle of hate? How does our ability to selectively remember painful events in our lives affect how we respond to those memories? If we were not able to remember having been the target of prejudice or discrimination, would we ever act as a perpetrator? In other words, is the act of being a perpetrator dependent upon first being a target?

Certain memories from my Peace Corps experience remain ingrained. As someone who tends to focus on the negative, many of my memories are difficult. Very early in my time in Slovakia, a professor at the university where I taught sat in my office with me. If I remember correctly, I was giving him an English lesson. The conversation turned to the Roma. He told me that Roma in Slovakia are like Blacks in the United States; they are lazy, dirty, and they don't want to work. My immediate thought was, "How in the world does he know anything about what African Americans in the United States are like?" I was extremely offended, though I did not reveal this to the professor for fear of offending *him,* and I truly believed his statements were completely erroneous. I came to understand just how right he was, though not as he had intended. Like Roma, Blacks in the United States suffer discrimination on a daily basis. There are a number of parallels between the experiences of these two groups, but these similarities have to do with the consequences of power and privilege in society, not with the stereotypes placed on either group.

Critical Reflection as an Act of Individual and Social Change

My process of critical reflection in Slovakia began slowly. Van Manen (1997) writes that reflection is not something you can engage in during a lived experience; it is something that unfolds once the experience is finished. Reflection is recollective,

retrospective. It is a process of looking back, of digging for new insight from past experience as we seek future understanding. While I engaged in reflection as an individual, I was concerned about the implications of what my reflections revealed for my classroom practice, for it was the conversations with my loving, caring students about Roma that troubled me most. When talking about attempts by Czech Roma to seek asylum in England, one student responded, "Send them [Roma] all to England." Images of the Holocaust ran wildly through my head. When one of my most pious students said, "We hate them," I realized that something was seriously awry. Such instances were cause for reflection.

Critical reflection involves an inward examination of one's individual beliefs about differences, where these beliefs come from, and how they shape our attitudes and actions. Levinas (1961/1969) writes that reflection "involves a calling into question of oneself, a critical attitude which is itself produced in the face of the other…" (p. 81). According to Howard (2003), "The term *critical reflection* attempts to look at reflection within moral, political, and ethical contexts of teaching….Critical reflection should include an analysis of how race, culture and social class shape students' thinking, learning, and various understandings of the world" (p. 197). Critical reflection is a means for teachers to analyze inequalities (Smyth, 1989) and to "surface" their underlying assumptions about race and culture (CampbellJones & CampbellJones, 2002). Reflection requires asking difficult questions, but the true challenge lies in digging deep enough to mine honest answers.

Reflection allowed me to come to a place where I could understand the consequences of the professor's statements on a level that exceeded the individual.

By engaging in critical reflection, I gained insight into the notions of prejudice and discrimination as concepts that are perpetuated at the individual level but are maintained at the institutional and structural level.

Reflection led me to prod my students about the various levels of discrimination against Roma. When they said, "They [Roma] don't want to work," I asked them if they were a shop owner, would they hire Roma. When the response was a resounding "No!" I asked how they can expect Roma to work if no one will hire them. Where can they possibly work? When I asked colleagues why Roma were placed in "special schools" for the mentally and emotionally challenged, they responded, "They need to learn to wash their hands; they don't know how to clean themselves," without any understanding that limiting their educational opportunities at such a young age meant limiting life opportunities and perpetuating disadvantage by birth.

When I saw the ghettos where Roma live in Eastern Slovakia, I was appalled. Many live in shacks outside of town, sometimes because the townspeople do not want them close by. Many of these ghettos have no access to town services such as water, gas, or electricity, but the towns condemn them for cutting wood in the forests for heat. Viewing the ghettos, I could not help but think of the Holocaust and the physical separation of Jews, Roma, and *others* from the rest of society, of the laws that ensured they remain as the *other*. I discovered over and over again that Roma in Slovakia were considered the problem. Views of Roma and laws limiting the exercise of human rights were never considered the problem. The problem was always articulated as one of "them" not being like "us."

Reflecting on discrimination against Roma led me to think about the education of students in the U.S. Just as in Slovakia, disadvantage by birth runs deep in our society. As Kozol (1992) illustrates, where you live determines the access to education that you have. Race and class are fairly good predictors of where one will end up in life. Our students do not enter our classes as clean slates. They come with social identities. These identities are ascribed by society and how teachers respond to these identities depends on how they have been socialized. As I think about students in classrooms in the U.S., I wonder how teachers can address the disadvantage that walks through their doors. How can they teach in ways that counter the stigma that society attaches to certain identities?

Borrowing From Social Reconstructionism

To help me situate my reflection in a social justice paradigm, I turn to social reconstructionism. A social reconstructionist approach addresses oppression and social structural inequality based on race, class and gender. Sleeter and Grant (1994) write:

> …young people, and particularly those who are members of oppressed groups, should understand the nature of oppression in modern society. Correspondingly, they should understand how their ascribed characteristics (e.g., race, class, gender) and their culture impact on that oppression, which should lead them as a result to develop the power and skills to articulate both their own goals and a vision of social justice for all groups and to work constructively toward these ends. (p. 210)

Social reconstructionism is based on the assumption that if we change the world significantly, then people's attitudes and behavior will change accordingly. "Individuals need to learn to organize and work collectively in order to bring about social changes that are larger than individuals" (Sleeter & Grant, p. 213). Critical

reflection, therefore, must be situated within a larger process of working toward

equity in the classroom and in society. Reflection can be seen here as a process that

builds teachers' capacities to understand what the problems are in society, how they

contribute to them, and how they can work to address them through an approach like

social reconstructionism. Teachers' self-understanding can position them to help

students "analyze their own lives in order to develop their practical consciousness

about real injustices in society and to develop constructive responses" (Sleeter &

Grant, p. 225). As an agent of change, I cannot work only for increased self-

knowledge; that self-knowledge must lead to transformation.

The Challenge of Maintaining a Social Justice Orientation

But *othering* is complex and reflection takes time. Despite my reflection and

my feelings of shame for *othering* the Roma men I passed on the street, despite my

desire to teach for change, I was able to *other* them again. One night I was with my

Slovak boyfriend, now husband, Palo, and several Peace Corps Volunteers in a new

bar in my town. The bar was on the second floor, and at the top of the staircase there

stood an imposing metal gate. On the other side of the gate sat a bouncer. In my

naiveté I allowed myself to believe that the gate had been erected to keep the mafia

out of the casino that was situated behind the bar. Mafia were rumored to travel

through Slovakia once a month from the east of the country to the west, stopping in

each town to collect payment from businesses in exchange for businesses not being

destroyed. My explanation made sense to me until I saw two Roma approach the gate.

The couple, dressed like anyone else in the bar, was wearing jeans and shirts. One

was even wearing a baseball cap. They did not fit in any way the common stereotype

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of the dirty Roma wearing filthy, tattered clothing. The Roma stood on the other side of the gate and talked to the bouncer for a while and then walked away. Palo and I watched this incident and in disgust he said, "Let's go. I don't go to white only bars." I responded, "Ok, just let me finish my drink."

I was so pleased by Palo's response. I felt as though our numerous conversations about Roma, in which he reminded me of the Slovak perspective, had been worthwhile. But later I wondered at what point my efforts to address the negative attitudes toward Roma had been replaced by my need to finish a drink. Certainly I wasn't dying of thirst. This wasn't a question of survival. What was it? Was I more concerned with changing my husband's attitude than maintaining my own? Or had I been desensitized by the issue? Had I grown tired of standing up for Roma? Had I become demoralized by the constant struggle? When one is demoralized is it easier to accept the status quo? I was upset by what I saw, so why didn't I demonstrate this by leaving immediately? Why didn't I take a stand? When and how does complacency take hold in the struggle for justice? Reflecting, I am reminded of the vigilance required in social justice work—vigilance within ourselves—lest we allow complacency to reign. Social justice is tiring work, but we cannot let our fatigue win at the end of the day.

As I leave the Peace Corps, I feel that I have found my passion: combating prejudice and discrimination in society. I am motivated to learn as much as I can about combating bias, so when I next enter the classroom, I will be able to break the barriers that prevented my discussions on bias from moving forward.

Running Forward: Seeking Answers and Finding More Questions

In Slovakia I witnessed the most overt manifestations of prejudice and discrimination I had ever encountered. I listened to peaceful, loving students express horrifying thoughts about Roma. I questioned their stereotypes and beliefs as well as the system of discrimination that marginalizes Roma. I became frustrated that I could not have productive conversations with my students. We could not move past their hatred. With my passion for combating discrimination found, I returned to the U.S. and spent three years learning and practicing anti-bias education. I have since worked with thousands of teachers and students, domestically and internationally, to address issues of bias.

At a recent high school outside of Washington, DC a student in a workshop asked where I am from. "You look exotic," she said. I told her I am Jewish and my grandparents were Russian. She said, "I thought you were Russian." I was a bit taken back by her comment. In my thirty-eight years I have never been told I look exotic. I thought about my looks in comparison to the students. I have long, curly brown hair, similar to some of the students. In the workshop I was wearing a sweater from Old Navy, a skirt from Banana Republic, and boots from Nine West. By American standards, these are very common brands. What was it about me that looked exotic and why did she use this specific term? I had already told the group that I am Jewish. Perhaps the term exotic was a polite way of defining my difference. Whatever the reason for her word choice, the consequence was to *other* me by identifying me as different. She had effectively created a barrier between us.

I turn to the etymology of exotic to help me unpack the implications of the word. Exotic is from the Latin *exoticus* meaning "from another country." The literal meaning is "from the outside." The meaning of "unusual or strange" dates back to 1629. How do we keep people at a distance when we view them as exotic? While the term may seem like a compliment, a form of praise, as if appreciating the seemingly different, it effectively keeps the "exotic" other at a distance. Engaging with the exotic *other* and finding that what seems exotic is, in fact, similar to "us" might entail moving the *other* from the outside to the inside? What would such a shift mean for society?

Madrid (2004), a fifth generation Latino American, shares what it is like to be the exotic *other*.

> I am exotic…but not exotic enough. I am, however, very clearly *the other*, if only your everyday, garden-variety, domestic *other*…Being *the other* means feeling different; is awareness of being distinct; is consciousness of being dissimilar. It means being outside the game, outside the circle, outside the set. It means being on the edges, on the margins, on the periphery. Otherness means feeling excluded, closed out, precluded, even disdained and scorned. It produces a sense of isolation, of apartness, of disconnectedness, of alienation. (p. 25)

Being the exotic *other* is not a compliment. While being called exotic did not affect my interaction with the students in my workshop, the use of such words, and the beliefs embedded within them, can have disastrous consequences. In the county in which that workshop took place, there is currently a very public debate about policies toward immigrants. Several politicians would like to limit services provided to illegal immigrants. What happens as a society when we *other* those who are different by creating separate policies denying them access to what those in power have? Why are

we so threatened by the *other,* and why do we need to keep *others* at such distance? What would happen if we engaged with the *other*?

Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

I am a facilitator. I left the traditional classroom 10 years ago and have since facilitated conversations in a variety of contexts on prejudice awareness and reduction. To teach is "to show, to point out" or "to give instruction," while to facilitate is "to make easier or less difficult; help forward (an action, a process)" (Dictionary.com). In difficult conversations, where the direction of the conversation is unknown, it is unnecessary to show the way or to give instruction. It is more important, however, to help the process move forward. In the sections that follow, I use both the term facilitate and teach, as teaching is a cultural concept that is interpreted in many ways. Even as a teacher in a traditional classroom, I considered myself a facilitator of conversations amongst my students.

My work is about providing a space where people from different backgrounds can come together and share stories as a way of building understanding, of opening doors to conversation. Bachelard (1958/1994) writes: "The door schematizes two strong possibilities, which sharply classify two types of daydream. At times, it is closed, bolted, padlocked. At others, it is open, that is to say, wide open" (p. 222). A closed door can represent hidden information, hidden identity. A door can be opened from the inside or the outside and can be opened a crack or wide. When I open a door and let someone in, I am demonstrating the trust I have for the person with whom I am speaking. I hope to create a space where students feel safe loosening the locks,

opening the door and sharing who they are, so they can engage with one an*other* across differences.

This is not tolerance education. It is far more than that. We must dig much deeper to discover our connectedness and find a path toward solidarity with one another. Nieto (1994) argues that tolerance represents a very low level of support for the *other*, reflecting "an acceptance of the *status quo* with but slight accommodation to difference" (p. 9). We must seek more than tolerance, acceptance, and respect as we move along the continuum of difference to a place of affirmation, solidarity, and critique. I do not seek a feel good, *kumbaya* atmosphere in my workshops. I aim to trouble the minds of students in ways that compel them to seek change. I want them to feel discomfort, the kind one feels inside that makes them uneasy and keeps them from sitting still. Ellsworth (1997) speaks of troubling dialogue, bringing it out of the confines that limit it to a controlled process of interaction. She writes, "I trouble dialogue, then, as a step toward getting curious…about what different, less idealist, more useful conceptions of citizenship—and of education—open up when I do so" (p. 16). And so, I trouble the conversation, avoiding neatly tied up ends.

When a white male student asks, "When will it be enough?" in response to efforts to increase female participation in science through a high school science award specifically for females, or in response to affirmative action efforts to increase African American presence in universities, I know we have a long way to go. But I know I have a captive audience, and if I can ask thought provoking questions, if I can create a sense of safety where they will share their personal stories, I believe we can

move forward. Stories are the crux of this work; personal stories are like blood coursing through our veins.

> If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive; that is why we put these stories in each other's memory. This is how people care for themselves. (Lopez, 1990, p. 48)

I want students to share their stories and to treasure the stories of their peers. Stories nourish the soul. In hearing the stories of those who are different from us, our filters of the world become clearer. It is through hearing stories that our empathy develops. And with a sense of empathy it is difficult to hate someone, regardless of how they may differ from us.

In phenomenological research, van Manen (1997) refers to these stories as anecdotes: "Anecdotes…are not to be understood as *mere* illustrations to 'butter up' or 'make more easily digestible' a difficult or boring text. Anecdote can be understood as a methodological device in human science to make comprehensible some notion that easily eludes us" (p. 116). Whether in written or oral form, the sharing of stories allows us to see that our experience is not the only experience in the world and that sometimes those who seem most dissimilar from us are in fact most similar.

My students and I share stories of who we are and what our identity means to us, stories of our experiences with prejudice and discrimination, stories of times we were an ally helping a person who was a target of prejudice or discrimination, and times we stood by watching things unfold and chose not to act. We talk about the *other* in their school and in society using the language of "collars" taken from Jane Elliot's (1970) experiment in 1970 in which she divided her students by eye color to

teach them about discrimination. Students watch excerpts from the video and express sadness at how quickly the effects of discrimination can be seen in academic performance. They talk about their experiences with teachers who are biased and who label them, limiting their potential because of expectations set by the color of their skin. One student shares her counselor's response when she requests entry into an advanced class: "Well, your grades are good for a Black student." We talk about what that means and how such thinking damages our schools and society. We talk of what it might be like to walk in the shoes of the *other*, how our lives might be different, and how people might treat us. We talk and talk and talk. Occasionally, some students cry and we all feel their pain. We thank them for sharing and for trusting us with their hurt. And occasionally, an honest student will say something that offends many. We talk about why the statement was offensive. We try to move forward.

Conversations on difficult topics, including prejudice and discrimination, cannot be scripted; they must develop and evolve from what the students and teacher each contribute. Such conversations cannot have predictable outcomes. Applebee (1996) reminds us that conversation is necessary to make knowledge students gain in the classroom both contextualized and productive. Discussions, as Applebee defines them, are open-ended. Topics discussed, and the degree of consensus or disagreement, are negotiated among the participants as the conversation develops. The teacher's role is to ask authentic questions that challenge thinking, questions that do not have right answers.

Gadamer (1975/2004) speaks of conversation as a process of coming to an understanding. In authentic conversation, each person opens to the *other*, "truly

accept[ing] his point of view as valid and transpos[ing] himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says" (p. 387). But at the same time, our conversations connect us to each other: "There can be no speaking that does not bind the speaker and the person spoken to" (p. 399), Gadamer reminds us.

Our conversations open possibilities for what the world might be. I strive for an atmosphere that elicits authenticity and a questioning of the ways of the world. I hope students will be able to look past their own self-importance to see the inherent value of the *other.* I want students to be moved by the stories of the *other,* so much so that the *other* compels them to seek unity and understanding, to work together for social justice.

Greene (1986) speaks of change in terms of possibility and imagination. She refers to Dewey's notion of imagination, noting that imagination allows meanings derived from prior experience to make present and future experience more conscious, "and conscious experience is always one that opens to what is uncertain, to what is not yet" (p. 76). But Greene's notions of possibility and imagination are not to remain abstract. She wants to see action through passionate teaching that moves students to "consciously critical and cognitive action," to embark "on new beginnings, moving (with an awareness of agency) toward possibility…" (p. 78). Our conversations lead to imagining a new world. Students must decide for themselves to take up the challenge to act.

We talk of this work as planting seeds. Students feel energized by the workshops. They feel closer to one an*other* and they want to change the world. They

want to change their school, and they very often want to change their teachers. I

remind them that we can never expect change. We must be mindful that our

discussions are simply planting seeds. We can never know when a person we engage

with will find a moment of truth or clarity in our conversation. We cannot hope for

immediate gratification. We must think of our work as a lifelong journey. Everyone is

at a different place. We cannot fault people for where they are when they join the

journey; we can only welcome them along the way.

Listening in Conversation

As an anti-bias educator, I have an ear that is specifically attuned to issues of

social justice. I do not listen impartially. I listen with an agenda of identifying, and if

possible, naming and revealing prejudice and discrimination. Listening as a facilitator

is an intense process. In listening I must help the participants unearth connections that

may not be obvious. I listen for "the dissonance between thought and action" (Levin,

1989, p. 101). Levin writes:

> In order to change the social ills we hear, we need to change our habits
> of listening; we need to change ourselves. But society itself needs to
> be changed. It is not enough simply to give voice to the pain, the
> suffering, and the need—and let that all be heard. The experience of
> the individual must be *connected* to a critical theoretical interpretation
> of society and culture—and to appropriate social praxes. (p. 115)

As we talk, we focus on our listening. For if we do not hear one an*other*, the stories

we tell are pointless. Through our listening, we truly engage the *other* in ways that

lead to transformation.

Conversations on difficult, controversial topics allow us to experience and

learn different perspectives. From this learning, our own thinking on topics can

progress, and we can draw our own conclusions, now or in the future. Applebee

(1996) notes, "…learning is a social process. We can learn to do new things by doing them with others…Tomorrow we can do on our own what today we do in the company of others" (p. 108). Through listening, students learn from each *other*, but listening is not enough. We must share our experiences with those we have come to trust. This process is not solely for my students, however. I must engage with them to show that I am not above them; I am with them. I, too, am learning to see *others* as they want to be seen.

Walking with my Students: Teaching as a Participatory Process

> *Poetry and Pedagogy:*
> The young child teaches the lesson: "What mean?"
> The teacher responds: "Try this. Add a sprinkle of that. Hmmmm….."
> The teacher grows as/into a child: "What mean?"
> The child offers wisdom, stirs the letters and adds a bit more colour.
> The teacher stirs in some mud. They approach one another,
> Hover around meaning,
> Contemplate meeting.
> (G.W. Rasberry, 1994, p. 2)

In difficult conversations it is important that the teacher participates as a learner. When conversations are not mapped and there is no set solution, the teacher's capacity to learn is as great as the students'. When students understand that teachers are part of the learning process, the atmosphere that develops can be one of trust and mutual respect. As a facilitator I share my own stories, to set an example of the trust I feel for the group and to show that I dare take risks. My stories often speak of my experiences in Slovakia, as these were life changing. I share my prejudices. I share the times I have been an *other* and the times I have *othered.* Often, when I share my experiences as an *otherer,* I hear gasps from the students. They do not expect to hear

someone talk of such things. They do not expect such honesty. They do not expect me to be a traveler with them on their journey to openness and awareness.

I love my work specifically because it forces me to reflect constantly, to *be* with my students constantly, not above them, but *with* them. This work demands that I acknowledge myself as a work in progress, and it forces me to be vigilant in addressing my own biases. It is hard work, but I have come to learn that there is no other way for me to live.

My challenge in sharing personal experiences is to find my place on the continuum of participation. I come to the students with a program philosophy, the basis of which is that prejudice and discrimination are harmful to society and counter to the notion of democracy. But while I have this greater mission to create equity in society, I try to keep my specific positions and opinions out of the workshop. I want students to come to their own conclusions and develop a sense of responsibility for the *other* of their own doing. Can I remain neutral while doing this?

Education for equity is by nature a political act. Seeking equal opportunities and access for children, regardless of their backgrounds, requires challenging the existing individual, institutional, and structural forms of discrimination that have resulted in a system of inequity and that allow such a system to flourish. Sleeter (2005) writes:

> Conceptualized as a form of political organizing, education may be a powerful vehicle to confront racism. An educator qua organizer must directly confront the vested interest white people have in maintaining the status quo, force them to grapple with the ethics of privilege, and refuse to allow them to rest comfortably in apolitical interpretations of race, globalization, and multicultural teaching. (p. 255)

The teacher as agent of change views the system as problematic, not the individual student. Being an agent of change implies a focus on teacher-student relationships. To want change, teachers must care; they must be concerned about their students' past, present and future. Such a perspective shifts the focus from teacher accountability, a notion that is heavily emphasized in the current high-stakes testing environment, to teacher responsibility. What is the responsibility of an agent of change? Is it even possible to envision accountability without responsibility? Can educators close the achievement gap without working to address the greater social and political contexts that have created such a gap? And can we talk about social and political contexts while remaining neutral?

The role of the teacher as an agent of change is tricky. Should a teacher infuse his or her own political agenda into the efforts to develop students' ability to identify and act upon social injustices? Liston and Zeichner (1987) argue that teachers should engage politically in order to confront the external conditions that limit educational reform. But, the teacher is an educator in the classroom and must be an activist outside the classroom. Teachers must help students find their own voices. Through moral deliberation and looking at all sides of an issue, teachers can avoid indoctrination.

Liston and Zeichner are helpful to me, but I feel there is insight to be gained from a more radical approach. I turn to Freire. In his discussion of Freire's philosophy of education, Giroux (1985) observes that education is more than a process of schooling; education represents a type of engagement with society.

> As a referent for change, education represents a form of action that
> emerges from a joining of the languages of critique and possibility. It

represents the need for a passionate commitment by educators to make the political more pedagogical, that is, to make critical reflection and action a fundamental part of a social project that not only engages forms of oppression but also develops a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to humanize life itself. (pp. xiii-xiv)

By demanding that the political be more pedagogical as opposed to the pedagogical more political, Freire's philosophy envisions education as a venture that takes place wherever power and politics intersect in society. One's commitment to change cannot be limited to the classroom, nor can it be void from the classroom. Freire (1998) is clear that his politics are a part of his classroom: "My very presence in the school as a teacher is intrinsically a political presence, something that students cannot possibly ignore" (p. 90). Freire speaks of "conscientization" (2000), of a heightened social consciousness, an awakening that makes it impossible to endure injustices.

Where, then, should a teacher reside on this continuum of political participation in the classroom? I choose to use my judgment and to float along the continuum. I intervene with alternate perspectives when I feel they are missing, but I leave decisions up to the students as to where they should reside. I cannot remove my politics, as they are a part of the greater mission and underlying philosophy of my work, nor can I hope to see change in the world if those who are working for change do not come to this place on their own.

In moving forward on my journey, in considering how I discuss the *other* with my students, I question how we go about shifting our perception of the *other*. How do we move beyond the need to have an *other*? I seek ways of envisioning the *other* that surpass the us/them dichotomy, that claim a new place for the *other* in society.

A Moral Claim: Coming Face-to-Face with the *Other*

The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas captures the importance of empathy and relating to the *other* in his writing. He articulates a philosophy of ethics that commands our attention as social beings, as people living among *others*. Levinas' (1961/1969) *other* has a face, a face that demands a caring approach. We have a responsibility to the *other*, " …my position as *I* consists in being able to respond to this essential destitution of the Other, finding resources for myself. The Other who dominates me in his transcendence is thus the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, to whom I am obligated" (Levinas, p. 215). How do we approach the moral claim that the *other* makes on us?

Levinas' *other* is not found exclusively among oppressed groups; his *other* encompasses anyone beyond the self. While Levinas' understanding of the *other* allows me to re-envision the role of the *other* in society and in our classrooms, I must remain mindful of contemporary social science's focus on the "us/them" dichotomy as a way of explaining how dominant groups throughout history have been able to subordinate *others*. Popular use of the term *other* appears in social and cultural criticism as a way to question the marginalization of certain groups in society. In the field of education, *othering* often refers to the many ways in which female students and students of color (generally referring to students who are not of European heritage) are treated as "less than" their white, male peers, for example experiencing lower expectations and being silenced in the classroom. *Othering* in the school setting provides the context for my research, which I explore further in the chapters that follow.

Detouring to Encounter the Face of the **Other**

When in Slovakia I realized at some point that I was not so different from those whom I viewed as prejudiced against Roma. I did not know any Roma. One day I found myself on the other side of the river in town, very close to an area of apartments inhabited by Roma. Instead of turning away from this area, I decided to walk through it. A young boy, perhaps seven, approached me and grabbed my bottom. Instead of yelling at him, I engaged him in conversation. I told him I was an English teacher and he asked if I would teach him English. He walked with me to the university and stopped at the entrance. As someone exited the university and looked at him, his facial expression changed from one of happiness to one of concern. The physical change he underwent, the sense of fear he exuded, remains with me. He backed away and went home. I had a few more encounters with this young boy and enjoyed talking to him. I gained validation from my conversation with him. He was a boy just like any other boy. My face-to-face encounter with the *other* left me even more resolute about combating prejudice and discrimination. Counter to the pervasive notion that Roma do not want to learn, this boy expressed interest in learning English. Perhaps if I had been even more committed to him, we could have done this. Being face-to-face with the *other* we come to know this moral claim. How we choose to respond to it remains up to us as individuals.

Happening Upon the Face of the **Other**

On a recent trip to the Philippines I felt this moral claim and could not turn away from it. In the Philippines I observed poverty as I had never seen before. I traveled for work to conduct workshops on peace education and conflict management.

Three colleagues accompanied me: two former state department employees with significant experience living abroad and a third colleague with a background in academia and facilitation who also has significant international experience. Pockets of poverty were omnipresent as we traveled throughout the capital. On the island we visited it was inescapable. At one point we stopped to tour a convent and in the parking lot sat a destitute family. Two young children approached us begging for money and food. The convent was closed so we had to leave. As we drove away, I gave the children the energy bars I had with me and my colleague gave a boy a coin. When the boy asked for more money, my colleague expressed disdain saying, "What does he want. I already gave him [the equivalent of 25 cents]" as if that amount of money would prevent the boy from wanting more. The faces of the *other* captured me. I couldn't let go.

We returned to the convent after lunch. Perhaps because I was pregnant at the time, I was extremely distraught by the very young. A naked baby lying over the shoulder of a mother as she begged for something from us, left me wanting to give them everything I owned. I felt pain, sadness, guilt, remorse. I felt like I was responsible for their poverty. I saw a mother lying in a corner with a toddler sleeping next to her. At least I hoped they were sleeping. The sores on the child's head beckoned me. The tufts of hair left me wondering what illness the child had. I laid my last energy bar that I had with me by the mother's side, knowing that one of the other children would probably take it. As we left I realized that I didn't need to carry home the boxes of uneaten energy bars I had with me at the hotel; I could give them away. I mentioned this to my colleague and his response was, "Well, let me go through

them first and take some." His response left me both disturbed and perplexed. Was

his need for an energy bar so great that he would deny a starving person a meal? Did

he have any concept of how troubling his response was? The *other* had claimed me.

Why had it not claimed my colleagues? "I *discover* my ethical responsibility in the

starving face of a child or in the outstretched hand of a beggar" (Moran, 2000, p.

349). These words resonate within me, creating a dissonance that causes me to

rethink how I live my life. As painful as it is to remember these children, I have to

consider myself fortunate enough to have encountered them and to feel the need to

live by them.

Later in another town I had our caravan stop by a mother and son digging

through trash. As I jumped out of my car, our security detail in the car behind us got

out to follow me. Nine men had to wait while I went around the corner to give these

two people energy bars. When I returned to the car I observed many patronizing

smiles. I told my colleagues that I did not expect to end poverty, but I could certainly

provide the next meal for the mother and son. Why shouldn't I give to an outstretched

hand when it is in my power?

A later discussion ensued about how much to tip the hotel staff. One colleague

expressed that a small amount was enough, suggesting that we don't want the hotel,

read economy, to become dependent on foreigners. While face-to-face with the *other*,

with a man struggling to put food on the table for his family, how could I think about

global economics? How could I deny a bellman an additional few dollars in tip?

Political and economic strategy did not concern me. What concerned me was the

moral claim of the *other* and my need to respond in any way I could, knowing that I would not see these people again.

How does my response as a human being in the world speak to my engagement with the *other* in the classroom? I cannot separate my actions as an individual from my actions as an educator. My response to the moral claim of the *other* in the world reflects how I will respond to the *other* in the classroom. My personal experiences lead me to probe further how reflection can shape our interactions and relationships with our students.

Being *Othered* and *Othering* in Education

Why is it necessary to reflect on experiences as *other* and *otherer*? How are these lived experiences relevant to the field of education? Why focus on teachers? Comber and Kamler (2004) remind us that the teacher plays a crucial role in students' lives: "The most important variable at school in making a difference for students is the teacher. It is the teachers' expectations, their enacted curriculum, their classroom talk, their relations to young people…that most effect outcomes" (p. 294). Teachers have the power to silence or embrace the voices in the classroom.

Howard (2003) observes, "As the teaching profession becomes increasingly homogenous, given the task of educating an increasingly heterogeneous student population, reflections on racial and cultural differences are essential" (p. 198). However, regardless of whether educators work with homogenous or heterogeneous populations, they are responsible for maintaining equity in the classroom. Promoting equity must also extend to groups not present in the classroom. How we choose to represent groups depends heavily on what our filters allow us to see. Our filters are

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informed by the messages we have received about, and the experiences we have had with, *others*. Reflecting on one's own experience can aid educators in understanding how they have come to see the world and the various peoples who inhabit it.

When an *othered* group is in the classroom, it is important for teachers to learn to challenge the assumptions they make about that group. As Guadalupe Valdes (1996) observes, when Mexican children came to school lacking the skills and knowledge teachers expected them to have, school teachers and administrators assumed parental indifference and a lack of interest in education. Such misunderstanding, based on false assumptions and lack of information, can be adjusted provided educators inform themselves about their students' cultural backgrounds as they live and experience them, and explore the biased notions on which they have based their assumptions. Reflecting on bias challenges teachers to see how their power influences their students either positively or negatively.

Walking into the Classroom

What is the moral claim that our students make on us?

"My eyes." "What about your eyes?" "I want them blue."… Here was an ugly little girl asking for beauty…A little black girl who wanted to rise up out the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes. (Morrison, 1970, p.174)

Michelle, black and vivacious, pointed to a picture in a book I was reading to a small group and said, "I wished I looked like her." The "her" was a blond, pink-cheeked girl. (Paley, 1979, p. 12)

From the fictional Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* to the very real Michelle in Vivian Paley's *White Teacher*, the desire of these young Black girls to be white, or to have access to that which belongs to the white world, is the result of living in a society that tells them they are lesser because they are Black. Pecola and Michelle exist on the outside

looking in because they have been positioned there by white society. How can a teacher nurture the souls of children who are taught to despise who they are because they do not fit the image established by the dominant groups in society?

Levin's (1985) concept of moral education states that we are born with a valuing process but that this changes as we turn to adults to guide our moral judgment. Levin suggests learning through the body to develop a compassionate outward stance. This learning through physical experience, while difficult, is necessary, as examples of compassionate behavior are not enough. Through imitation, tactile experience, and awareness of the body, children can understand what compassion *feels* like.

Is it possible, then, that individuals who move easily from *other* to *otherer* have less compassion and have relied more heavily on adults for moral guidance than on their own internal compass? According to Levin (1985), the role of adults, in particular teachers, is clear. The audience is clear as well. Educators and parents must begin at a very early age to work with children on their moral education. By raising children who understand and have experienced compassion, who express concern for the well being of people they know and don't know, perhaps we can foster a sense of self in individuals that does not need an *other*, that does not need to find self-worth by excluding or denigrating groups of people, and that does not find satisfaction or gratification in moving from target to perpetrator. In fact, were we able to raise such children, perhaps there would be no targets from which the cycle of hate could begin.

Caring for Our Students

How we see our students and how we respond to them depends very much on our philosophy of education and our views on the purpose of teaching and learning. While some may argue that schooling is about academics, I argue an alternative view. Schooling is an opportunity to nurture caring, loving individuals who will be effective global citizens. Among an educator's primary responsibilities is the need to create a safe, inclusive learning environment where all students are understood and respected for who they are, regardless of their background. Vivian Paley (1979) reflects on this space in "White Teacher" as she explores her interactions with her Black students:

> It is becoming clear why my experiences with Black children have meant so much to me. I have identified with them in the role of the outsider. Those of us who have been outsiders understand the need to be seen exactly as we are and to be accepted and valued. Our safety lies in schools and societies in which faces with many shapes and colors can feel an equal sense of belonging. Our children must grow up knowing and liking those who look and speak in different ways, or they will live as strangers in a hostile land. (pp. 131-132)

Nel Noddings (2005b) writes of this approach and practice as an "ethic of care" (p. xv). She focuses on caring as a relation as opposed to a virtue: "Caring is a way of being in relation, not a specific set of behaviors" (p. 17). Further, it is not enough for an educator to believe that she or he is caring. The question Noddings (2005a) asks is, do the students perceive that the teacher is caring? "Does the student recognize that he or she is cared for?" (p. 2). Noddings pushes us to look at students as being more than empty vessels into which we deposit the required information, similar to "banking education" that Freire (1985) describes.

Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, and Lipton (2000) identify an empathic stance as a key component of care. "Such a stance requires listening continuously for others'

meanings. It requires attending carefully to what others reveal about their experiences. It allows for the possibility that sometimes different meanings cannot be understood but must simply be respected" (p. 152). As van Manen (1991) reminds us, the most important pedagogical question is: "How does the child experience this particular situation, relationship, or event?" (p. 11). We must understand that our students are cognizant of who we are and how we present ourselves. They *feel* how we respond to them and these feelings can help or hurt our relations with them. If we view children in this light, we must consider the possibility that our biases are visible to them. If we cannot hide our biases, then we must address them, unpack them, explore where they come from and come to terms with the fact that they exist.

Students are aware of power plays in the classroom and are attuned to how teachers address situations when they arise. Developing an "ethic of care" and creating a safe space requires that educators think about which attitudes and behaviors to nurture in a classroom and which attitudes and behaviors are counter to their goals. Teachers must address the behaviors that lead to the exclusion of some children because they are different in one way or another from the rest of the group. By reflecting on one's own biases and personal experiences with prejudice and discrimination, both as target and perpetrator, educators can begin to examine the emotions and actions that may drive their students to experience and exhibit such behaviors and can develop appropriate responses when these behaviors occur. In eliminating the experience of the outsider, we can begin to work toward breaking the cycle of hate.

If we adhere to the mantra that prejudice is learned and can be unlearned and believe that school is about more than academics, then we must teach children when they are young the ways of engaging in relationships that will allow them to affirm one another as they get older. To do so, we must model caring relations for our students. "So we do not tell our students to care; we show them how to care by creating caring relations with them" (Noddings, 2005b, p. 22).

Ted Aoki (2005d) poses the question, "What *is* teaching?" in contrast to the usual question, "*What* is teaching?" He writes:

> So placed, I may be allowed to hear better the voice of what teaching essentially is. The question understood in this way urges me to be attuned to a teacher's presence with children. This presence, if authentic, is being. I find that teaching so understood is attuned to the place where care dwells, a place of ingathering and belonging, where the indwelling of teachers and students is made possible by the presence of care that each has for the other. (p. 191)

This indwelling is what allows a teacher to unite thought and soul. I maintain that this indwelling, this space made possible by embracing an ethic of care, relies on teachers doing the necessary critical reflection that allows them to understand the assumptions and preconceived notions they hold of their students. How can we truly care for one another with societal barriers forming/blocking how we see one another? What are the boundaries of caring in a teaching setting? How do we teach educators to care in an environment concerned with "doing?"

Aoki (2005d) emphasizes the role of the teacher, as opposed to the greater system within which the teacher functions. Aoki warns against conflating who a teacher is with what a teacher does**:** "…such a focus [on doing] may be neglectful of the fact that the effectiveness of teaching may have more to do with the being of

teacher—who a teacher is" (p. 190). When teaching is thoughtfulness, Aoki suggests, teaching is "an embodied doing and being, thought and soul in oneness of the lived moment" (p. 190). What does it mean to bring thought and soul into teaching? In teacher education programs, what does it look like to emphasize who a teacher *is*? It is so much easier to focus on what to do, the outward manifestations of teaching, than it is to emphasize the inner reflection and growth we need to experience and engage in in order to become "effective" teachers. How would emphasizing critical reflection in teacher education encourage teachers to think about what in their soul drives them to teach? What in their soul allows them to connect with their students? What in their soul needs work? What in their soul prevents them from seeing their students for who they truly are?

Reflecting on caring, I return to my classroom in Slovakia. I think about my relationship with my students and wonder whether my priority was teaching them how to become English teachers or instilling in them an ethic of care. My reflection is opened further by a series of conversations I am privileged to have with my students almost ten years after having left them.

Coming Full Circle: Reconnecting with Past Students

I am in Slovakia staying with my in-laws so they can take care of my two young children while I write my comprehensive exams. As I always do, I reach out to Zuzana, the one student I worked closely with in creating an association of English Language Learners in the town where I lived. Zuzana tells me that Linda, another former student, is in town teaching at a new private language school for young

children. I get extremely excited. I haven't seen Linda in almost ten years, since I left the Peace Corps. She has been out of the country on each of my return visits.

Linda was one of those students that a teacher never forgets. She was energetic, passionate, creative, talented, with a palpable energy that took over a room when she entered. She brought intensity to everything she did, from competing in poetry competitions to acting. Linda was also very troubled and struggled with many demons. Linda took a break from her studies shortly after I left and finished her studies after her cohort graduated. She has been traveling to religious retreats throughout Europe for the past 10 years finding inner peace.

Linda calls during my stay and invites me to watch her teach English to three year-olds. As I expect, Linda integrates drama and music in her class. Her interactions with students, including a young boy, Kubko, who could not sit still, demonstrate tremendous care, attentiveness, and tact. At one point the boy begins hitting Linda's "magic box." She gently tells him not to and when he continues, she takes his hand as he hits the box, kisses the back of it, and pulls him toward her so he can sit on her lap. He settles in her lap and smiles. His entire demeanor shifts. In this process, Linda does not skip a beat in her lesson. She exemplifies what van Manen (1991) refers to as the tact of teaching: "Tact touches a person with a touch, with a word, with a gesture, with the eyes, with an action, with silence" (p. 143). She recognizes that Kubko needs her contact and she effortlessly gives it. Through her touch, through tactful action, Linda exhibits her thoughtfulness and her primary concern for the care of her student.

After class Linda and I talk about her teaching. She is currently teaching in her third year at a *zakladna skola*, a school for children in grades 1 through 8. She teaches students aged 10 to 14. Linda also teaches a few hours a week at the private school where I observed her teaching.

Linda begins our conversation by talking about the difficulties she has teaching at the *zakladna skola*. Her greatest challenge is using progressive teaching approaches and bringing in materials to supplement the text—strategies that are still not welcomed by all, in particular those who taught for decades under communism. Additional challenges include dealing with students who don't express any interest in learning English. She complains that the older students don't see the relevance of learning English for their lives. She comments, "There are a lot of Gypsies and they just want to be unemployed." At first I let Linda's comment pass, knowing I will come back to it. I talk to her about finding out what interests her students and she mentions the challenge of having to stick to the state-mandated text. She talks about trying her best to appreciate all of her students. I bring up the many conversations we had in class years ago about Roma, about the belief that Roma do not want to work.

Nine years later I ask Linda about her expectations of her students. When she makes statements about Roma lacking a desire to go to school or to work, based on stories that people have told her, I ask her if the storytellers are Slovak or Roma. I ask her what the Roma perspective on education or employment might be. We talk about Ogbu's (1991) controversial research on the education experience of African Americans in the United States. He presents the development of oppositional identity as a reason for poor performance among involuntary minorities. Students develop

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resistance to schooling because they believe the discrimination they face will

continue once they finish school and try to enter the job market. I describe for Linda

the studies of Slovak Roma, who when interviewed about their lack of participation in

the education system, voice strikingly similar sentiments.

Engaging in Productive Conversations

Linda and I talk about the Roma in her class. She tells me about a new Rom

student in class who was treated horribly by her classmates. She tells me that this

student became her favorite because she felt such compassion for the young girl. She

talks about trying so hard to care for all of her students, even those who are mean to

others. We talk of developing the student-teacher relationship and of the importance

of care. She talks more about her positive encounters with the *other* in the classroom,

and as she shares her stories, I know that she is capable of seeing the best in all of her

students. I question her and she is able to find examples within her own teaching that

challenge her stereotypes. Linda is ripe for such conversation. She has developed an

impressive desire to be positive and to do good by all. Levinas (1961/1969) writes,

"To be for the Other is to be for good" (p. 261). As I say goodbye to Linda, I believe

that her reflection will lead her to see the face of the *other* and to feel the moral claim.

Five days later Linda calls. An unusual series of events leads her to speak with

Janka, a friend of hers who ran a summer program for Roma children this year and

who wants to develop after school programs for the children. Linda speaks with this

woman about her conversation with me and feels compelled to volunteer a few hours

a week for the after school programs. She calls to tell me about this and invites me to

meet with Janka. Linda refers to the wonders of God's work. I interpret the sequence of events as Linda beginning to welcome the *other* and responding to the moral claim.

A few days after meeting with Linda, I have dinner with six more students. We talk about our lives. They talk about their teaching. They ask me about my research and we engage in conversations about the *other*. They smile at how I have not changed, how I am still driven by social justice. They say very thoughtful things about what I taught them, speaking in great detail about how they use the theory and practical exercises from our classes in their classrooms. We talk about a memorable, but difficult, incident in which I caught students cheating on a vocabulary test in class. And they remember the assignment that replaced the vocabulary test. The students had to write an essay explaining what honesty meant to them. They remember the event with absolute clarity. And they talk about how frequently they share this experience with their students. I feel tremendous joy in talking with these students and wish I could teach them again. What wonderful conversations we would have nine years later!

We speak of my relationship with them as more than a teacher, as someone who cared about them and who felt hurt by the cheating. They talk about my influence on them, and I remind them of the capacity they have to influence their students. Beata mentions her most challenging students who are not interested in learning English. We talk about care in the classroom and I suggest to her that as a teacher, English is not the only thing she is teaching her students. I ask her to think of her favorite teacher growing up and what she remembers of that person. Does she remember the subject matter the teacher taught, or is there something more? Our

conversation reminds me of van Manen's (1991) notion of pedagogical influence, which "has the quality of opening up possibilities of being and becoming" (p. 14). The notion of pedagogical influence connotes responsibility for one's students, concern for their well-being. I urge the group to remember this and to foster caring relationships in the classroom, knowing that the capacity for influence is always present.

Looking Back: Moving Forward

Two days before I return to the United States I meet with Linda, Janka, and Marian. Janka is a pediatrician and Marian is a police officer. Together they developed a summer program for Roma children and they would like to continue throughout the school year to offer after school programs. Upon Linda's invitation, I meet with them to discuss funding opportunities. When I agree to the meeting, I have concerns. I am concerned about the attitude they might have about the "Roma question." I think about how I will address what I might feel to be a paternalistic approach. I have experienced this in many conversations with Slovaks who express in essence, "They need to be like us." What ensues, however, is one of the most positive, powerful conversations I have had with Slovaks about Roma.

Marian works in crime prevention as a police officer. He engages on a daily basis with Roma. From his perspective, the greatest problem in organizing activities for Roma children lies in finding people who are willing to engage with them. Money and space are not a problem. Marian is not interested in paying people to work with Roma. He wants to find people who want to work with them because they believe in such work. As he says, "People who have a good heart." In his experience this past

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summer, only one person of the many who worked with the Roma children was willing to engage with them as people. For Marian, it is a question of identifying people who will treat the Roma children as equals. In listening to his perspective on Roma, I am pleasantly surprised. To know that there is a police officer, an authority figure in the community, who has this perspective of interaction is very heartening. I ask him how his perspective developed. He says that he is a communicator, a talker. When he joined the police department and worked on the street, he went into the Roma areas and saw crimes being committed. Instead of arresting people, he started talking to them. He established relationships with them, had experiences with them. He came to know the face of the *other* and felt a responsibility to the *other*. I leave the meeting feeling hopeful and sad. I want to live here now and work with these people. I want to help them move forward. I agree to communicate with them by e-mail and to help in any way I can. I believe for the first time that there is a desire here to see the *other* from a humanizing perspective.

At the end of the conversation, Marian talks about wanting his children to see a Rom who steals as a person who has stolen something instead of "a typical Roma thief." Janka asks Marian if he protects his wallet when he is with Roma. He says "No," with an expression of "Why should I?" When he asks her the same, she smiles in a way that acknowledges her complicity in this action in which so many engage. I smile as well, knowing of my experience nine years ago that remains as a scar in my memory, a constant reminder of what has led me to my phenomenon.

I reflect deeply on these conversations and feel as though they have propelled me far deeper into my phenomenon than I could have anticipated. As my

phenomenological question takes shape, I feel a responsibility to myself and to my

former students to understand what it means to *other* in the classroom.

Returning to My Beginnings: My Found Phenomenon

My personal experiences and professional commitment to combating

prejudice and discrimination lead me to wonder about the lived experience of being

both an *other* and an *otherer*. **What is the lived experience of teachers as both**

other and *otherer,* as target and perpetrator? Embedded in this larger question are

two sub-questions: 1) What are the teachers' experiences participating in and

mitigating *othering* in the classroom? and 2) In what manner do they understand the

shaping of their prior experiences as they participate in and mitigate *othering* in the

classroom? The value of these research questions lies in the potential for such

experiences to shed light on how we can create safe, inclusive spaces in our

classrooms where our students' backgrounds are no longer viewed as barriers to their

learning or our understanding of them.

Othering is a complex social phenomenon that I seek to unpack in order to

consider how educators can teach all of their students. My life journey leads me to

this phenomenon, but now found, I look to teachers' experiences around this *othering*

phenomenon. Through the lived experiences of K-12 teachers in the United States I

desire to understand the process of shifting from *other* to *otherer*, and to consider the

value of critical reflection on interactions with students.

Phenomenology as My Guide

To guide me through my research on teachers' experiences around *othering,* I

have chosen the methodology of phenomenology, an interpretive research approach.

Phenomenology's search for meaning through the words of participants offers a deep exploration of experiences around *othering*. The autobiographical orientation within phenomenology allows me to uncover a personal understanding of my phenomenon, an evolving understanding that takes shape as I write my way to meaning.

According to van Manen (1997), phenomenology "…permits probing of the deeper meaning of what it is for persons (teachers and students) to be human, to become more human, and to act humanly in educational situations" (p. 31). Phenomenology is "a project of someone: a real person, who…sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence" (van Manen, p. 31). The phenomenological process for the researcher begins by writing about one's own life experiences and pre-understandings of the phenomenon (Gadamer, 1975/2004). It is through our pre-understandings that we begin the meaning-making process. My background in anti-bias education, which demands rigorous self-reflection, draws me to this methodology.

Phenomenological research engages the researcher in an authentic interplay with study participants. The conversational effort is not to obtain theoretical concepts from the participant, but to encourage deep, experiential reflection where the participant uses her or his senses to access the lived experience from a given moment. This emphasis on authentic conversation, which we "fall into" (Gadamer, 1975/2004) rather than conduct, speaks to my facilitator background.

To guide my research and find my way to meaning, I turn to Max van Manen's (1997) six activities in phenomenological research that will be further explicated in Chapter Three:

1. Turning to the phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world.
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it.
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon.
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon.
6. Balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

In this chapter I have shared the journey that has brought me to my phenomenon, my experiences as both *other* and *otherer*, my work as an anti-bias educator, my reflections as both an individual and a teacher. I have done this to reveal my pre-understandings of *othering*, so I can walk openly into conversations with teachers and absorb their experiences as I seek to uncover what it means to *other* in the classroom.

Organization of the Journey

Understanding what has brought me to my phenomenon, in Chapter Two I examine additional sources that help me unearth meaning, constantly digging deeper to discover what it means to *other*. In this chapter I share the meaning excavated from two preliminary conversations with teachers about their experiences as *other* and *otherer*. In Chapter Three I look to the philosophers who guide my way. I challenge the use of Heidegger in social justice research, and I explore Levinas and Derrida as philosophers with bodies of work that speak to ethics and responsibility. I also examine the methodology of phenomenology—human science research that does not provide a road map. In Chapter Four I introduce the teachers whose stories guide my work. Their voices provide additional roads that continually extend my journey, taking me on a path I cannot plot in advance. In Chapter Four and Chapter Five I identify and interpret the themes that emerge from the teachers' voices. I search for

themes in their stories that illuminate how teacher education programs can prepare teachers to affirm who their students are as they help prepare these students for who they are going to be. The implications I draw for teacher education form the heart of Chapter Six.

With my framework in hand, I turn now to the many sources that allow me to continually peel back the layers of the *othering* process. As I continue on my journey, I remain aware that at times I will walk quickly, perhaps run, excited by something I read or hear, like the recent conversations I had with my former students in Slovakia. And at other times I will stop for a rest, confused, perplexed by the complex phenomenon I have named. But I know I will not rest for long, because as I rest, my nagging scar, the memories of my experiences of *othering,* call on me to stand up and move forward. I cannot turn away from the sense of urgency I feel emanating from this phenomenon. Every day I experience and witness acts of *othering*, and in these moments I wonder what the world would be like, what it would *feel* like, if this phenomenon did not exist.

CHAPTER TWO: ENCOUNTERING THE DREAM

OF THE *OTHER*

Conceptions of *Othering*

In order to draw meaning from teachers' lived experiences around *othering*, I explore in this chapter a few of the many interpretations of the term *other*, and offer a further rendering of what the experiences mean of individuals who are both *other* and *otherer*. Various disciplines, ranging from anthropology and sociology to psychology and philosophy, have definitions and interpretations of *othering*. My purpose here is not to provide a comprehensive review of *othering* in the various disciplines, but to identify a few, among the many, that have been salient for me.

Stuart Hall (1997) provides four theoretical accounts for explaining difference as *otherness*. The first account comes from linguistics: "'difference' matters because it is essential to meaning; without it, meaning could not exist" (Hall, 1997, p. 234). Meaning is relational; therefore, it is the difference between two opposites that carries a message. Black, for example, gains meaning when compared with its opposite— white.

The second explanation also stems from theories of language but relies on interaction and dialogue for meaning: "We need 'difference' because we can only construct meaning through a dialogue with the 'Other'" (Hall, 1997, p. 235). Our meaning is modified by the interaction we have with *others*; therefore, the *other* is essential for meaning making. In this theoretical interpretation, meaning is always being negotiated; it is never fixed.

The third explanation Hall provides is anthropological. An *other* is a person, or group of people, who differs in some way from the mainstream or norm. Culture depends on things being categorized in order to be understood. People are assigned to a place in the binary "us/them," marking their difference, as a way of giving meaning to things.

The fourth theoretical account is psychoanalytic, framing the *other* in terms of the development and maintenance of the self: "The 'Other' is fundamental to the construction of the self, to us as subjects, and to sexual identity" (Hall, 1997, p. 237). Freud advanced theories of the self, and the psychoanalyist Lacan furthered these notions in his exploration of the *other*. Lacan focused on the "mirror stage" of development in which a child understands him or herself as separate from the mother. He refers to this reflection outside of oneself as the "look from the place of the other" (as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 237). This reflection from outside the self allows the child to relate to the world and to the *other*. Lacan distinguishes between the *other* and the *Other*. The *other* with a small *"o"* is a reflection and projection of the ego. The *Other* with a big *"O"* represents the symbolic order, language, law, that which cannot be assimilated, that which exists outside one's conscious control.

The *other* as the development of self-consciousness is rooted in the philosophy of Hegel (1952/1977), who emphasized the development of knowing of *the self* through the relationship between a lord and bondsman, frequently referred to as the master-slave dialectic. According to Hegel absolute knowledge must be preceded by a self-consciousness recognizing another self-consciousness. When two meet, the "I" chooses to ignore the *other*, or it sees the *other* as a threat to itself. The

only way to continue toward self-consciousness is to engage in a life or death struggle with the *other* for dominance. The struggle does not end in death, but through an agreement by both selves that one shall dominate the *other*. The master-slave relationship is born. The master's self-consciousness is dependent on the slave's existence, but this state of dominance does not consist of true recognition. The slave who works for the master, struggling for freedom, achieves a higher level of self-consciousness, a truer sense of self-certainty, than the master can ever enjoy.

The field of psychology provides guidance in understanding the roots of prejudice. The three main theoretical approaches to the causation of prejudice in psychological research are the cognitive approach, the social psychological approach and the personality approach. The cognitive approach suggests "prejudice is a function of cognitive processes where stereotypic information about social groups, stored in memory, is automatically activated and affects people's judgments and behavior toward members of the target group" (Akrami, 2005, p. 4). The social psychological approach points to social group membership, social identity, and social position. The personality approach suggests that prejudice is caused by personality characteristics.

Research on personality factors began with Allport's (1954/1979) seminal work in which he identified frustration, aggression, guilt and projection as psychological determinants of prejudice. Likewise, in early studies, Saenger (1953) described the need for conformity and personal insecurity as additional factors contributing to the development of prejudice. Saenger (1950) further discusses personality characteristics of individuals predisposed to highly prejudiced beliefs,

distinguishing between a "democratic personality" and an "authoritarian personality."

The authoritarian personality represses feelings of weakness, such as love and

sympathy, valuing strength and toughness instead. Saenger provides the caveat,

however, that while prejudiced and relatively unprejudiced individuals differ in basic

philosophy of life, feelings about *others* and themselves, and their relation to *others*,

not all individuals displaying prejudices fit the described set personality pattern.

Saenger also acknowledges the role of society in contributing to prejudice,

acknowledging that a prejudiced individual might not be prejudiced if he or she lived

in a society that did not sanction such attitudes. Contemporary research on personality

characteristics focuses on right wing authoritarianism, social dominance theory, and

the Big Five personality factors of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion,

agreeableness, and neuroticism (Akrami, 2005).

The *other* in contemporary philosophy is explored greatly in the work of

Levinas, whose writings I consider in greater detail in Chapter Three. Levinas

presents an ethical orientation to the *other.* His use of the term *other* differs

significantly from many philosophical interpretations, as well as understandings in

other disciplines, in that his *other* has a face, a face that demands a caring, loving

approach. The *other* is to be embraced. But can we learn to embrace the *other*, given

our country's history of *othering* groups of people based on their identity? Can we

learn to embrace the *other* in the classroom, given our legacy of discrimination in

education? What would happen if we did?

With these theories in hand, I return to my phenomenological research of

teachers' lived experiences as *other* and *otherer*. My research approach is one of

human science, as opposed to social science. In interpreting the words of my

participants, I draw on the theories discussed above, and many more. I do not follow

any one theoretical orientation. My aim is not to master a particular theory, to develop

a new theory, or to represent what a theory looks like in practice, but rather to

develop my critical pedagogic competence, my ability to approach unique

pedagogical situations with thoughtfulness and tact (Van Manen, 1997). To do this I

draw from the pre-conceptual and pre-theoretical experiences of my participants in

order to identify lived accounts rather than theoretical abstractions.

In the sections that follow I use the metaphor of dreaming to open up what it

means for teachers to be both *other* and *otherer*. I bring the child into the discussion

to contextualize the process of *othering* further and to maintain a connection between

teachers' experiences and their interactions in the classroom. And I borrow the words

of two teachers who share with me their experiences as *other* and *otherer*, as I

continue to unpack my phenomenon, gaining meaning through questioning.

For the Good of the Child

Harlem: A Dream Deferred
What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore--
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over--
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?
(Hughes, 1959/1990, p. 268)

Langston Hughes' poem is a stark reminder of the potential consequences of unequal education. What happens when students of color are not able to pursue their dreams? Do they accept their subordinate social status and the accompanying marginalization in the classroom, or do they lash out at their oppressor? From Hughes' social commentary, I return to the fictional Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* (Morrison, 1970), and Michelle, a black student in author Vivian Paley's (1979) classroom, two young girls who want to be white, and I wonder how a teacher should respond to children in the classroom who internalize oppression. Bell hooks (2000) writes, "Cultures of domination attack self-esteem, replacing it with a notion that we derive our sense of being from dominion over another" (p. 70). Can a teacher reverse the damage that a racist, classist, sexist, and heterosexist society does to a child's self-worth?

> Lisa Delpit (1995) reminds us that we view the world through unique lenses:
>
> We all interpret behaviors, information, and situations through our
> own cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level
> of conscious awareness, making it seem that our own view is simply
> "the way it is." Learning to interpret across cultures demands
> reflecting on our own experiences, analyzing our own culture,
> examining and comparing varying perspectives. (p. 151)

While Delpit focuses on cultural difference, her words can be applied to any area of difference between a teacher and student. As Delpit suggests, reflecting on our experiences is a cornerstone of effective teaching, and so I ask: What are teachers' experiences around *othering,* and how can reflecting on these experiences shape how teachers view and interact with students who differ from them? To gain an initial understanding of this phenomenon, I invite two teachers, Judy and Jaime, to share their stories with me. Listening to their voices, several themes reveal themselves

opening my understanding of *othering* still further. But first, I attempt to understand how the dream has come to be deferred. How is it that students find themselves on unequal terrain in the classroom?

Running After a Dream

Why are the dreams of many students of color unrealized? What history provides the basis of Hughes' haunting lines? Looking back to our country's legacy of school segregation sheds light on the experience of many of our students. Since its beginnings, the educational system in the United States has treated people of color as outsiders. Initially, people of color were not allowed an education. And later, after gaining access to schools, students of color continued to be treated as *others*. Through a dual approach to education, schools were viewed as separate but equal. Students of color were considered inferior and could not attend white schools. Following the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954, a plural approach to education ensued. Yet, while a plural system allowed white students and students of color to exist in the same schools, students of color were viewed as culturally deprived (Goodwin, 1997). The cultural deprivation paradigm of the 1960s posited that low-income students can reach high levels of academic achievement, but their socialization experiences at home and in their communities prevent them from learning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that middle class children have which lead to their success (Banks, 2004). This deficit model led to programs such as Head Start that were intended to compensate for the detrimental effects of low-income African American homes.

What does it mean to have a deficit? Turning to the etymology of the term deficit offers new understanding. The etymology leads me to the "true sense" of the word. Deficit is from the Latin *deficit,* meaning "it is wanting" in the sense of lacking. In the context of school, students with a deficit are lacking abilities, skills, or understanding. But is there one true sense here? Students labeled as deficient are also "wanting" in that they want an education just as privileged children do. The verb want means "to lack" or "to desire, wish for." There is an inherent connection between these two meanings, and thus between all students, regardless of their background. Do we not wish for that which we are lacking? All students come to school with a deficit in knowledge. One of the purposes of schooling is to help students construct knowledge and gain understanding. Reframing what it means to have a deficit in the school context, reveals deficit as a characteristic of all students. But just as all students come to school with deficits, they all come with experiences. Giroux (1992) writes:

> You can't deny that students have experiences and you can't deny that these experiences are relevant to the learning process…Students have memories, families, religions, feelings, languages, and cultures that give them a distinctive voice. We can critically engage that experience and move beyond it. But we can't deny it. (p. 17)

How would our teaching transform if we were to acknowledge the experiences of all students instead of privileging those that seem more like our own?

In response to the cultural deprivation paradigm, scholars in the 1970s developed an explanation for the poor academic achievement of low-income students that was based on cultural conflict in school. According to cultural difference theory, students do not achieve academic success because their home culture conflicts with

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the culture of their school. Students from low-income families, as well as racial and ethnic minority groups, have rich cultures, but these cultures are different from the school culture, which results in problems in school (Delpit, 1995).

Critics of cultural difference theory argue that this perspective reduces racial inequality to a problem of miscommunication (Ogbu, 1991). Ogbu presents the development of oppositional identity as a reason for poor performance among involuntary minorities (minorities who came to the United States by force, as opposed to voluntary minorities who came by choice). Oppositional identity develops because "they [involuntary minorities] perceive and experience their treatment by members of the dominant group as collective and enduring. They believe that they cannot expect to be treated like members of the dominant group regardless of their individual differences in ability, training or education…" (p. 16). Artiles, Trent, and Palmer (2004) note that the theory assumes only two racial groups populate classrooms, and that the hypothesis emphasizes homogeneity within a cultural group. They warn that this approach can lead to overgeneralizations about groups that are in fact very diverse. How can we envision schooling differently so there is no one school culture? And how can teachers know their students in ways that bridge cultural gaps? When teachers ignore differences in the classroom or respond to them inauthentically, they risk alienating students. What happens when we change the meaning of difference, so it does not suggest *otherness*, but rather openness?

Regardless of the arguments in favor or against cultural difference theory, the shift from deprivation to difference led to a third approach to education: the multicultural approach. Multiculturalism emerged in response to the lack of equity

and social justice in education that people expected following the Civil Rights

Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in

1954 to desegregate schools (Bennett, 2001). Multicultural education also emerged

from a critique of the Eurocentric curriculum used at the time, as well as a response to

the poor performance of African American students (Banks, 2004).

Initially, multicultural education was reactive in nature, intended to address

the consequences of the deprivation paradigm on how children were perceived in

schools. Unfortunately, multicultural education for teachers became synonymous with

"minority" education, existing within a Eurocentric framework (Goodwin, 1997).

Multicultural efforts were designed as "add on" components intended to remediate

non-white students. The heart of American education, created for middle class white

students, remained the same. This add-on approach, still prevalent today, can only

distance marginalized groups further. How can Black history permeate the dominant

curriculum if it is always set aside as *other* in Black History Month?

Banks (2004) identifies the following contemporary goals of multicultural

education: "To reform the schools and other educational institutions so that students

from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational

equality" and "To give male and female students an equal chance to experience

educational success and mobility" (p. 3). For multicultural education to be successful

it must include institutional changes in curriculum; teaching materials; teaching and

learning styles; the attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of school staff, and the

culture of the school. Multicultural education cannot be limited to an add-on approach

if it is to contribute to social change. When we add-on content for our students, what

gets subtracted? Do we not compromise the importance of the content by relegating it to a certain time of the day or even year?

Despite theoretical attempts to move beyond the cultural deficit paradigm, the notion that poor students and students of color suffer from a lack of core values at home still exists. Kozol's (1992) examination of disparities in funding between poor and rich districts in several cities in the United States exposes cultural deficit thinking among many. "Money is not the answer…It has to begin in the home" (p. 170) claim residents of a community facing resource distribution to support under funded schools. In another instance, an assemblyman from a suburban district doubts that giving a poor, largely African American area extra money will improve its schools. "How about providing values instead?" he asks (pp.170-171). Kozol's research reminds us of what it is like to live on "the *other* side of the tracks," where students dream of knowing "how the *other* half lives." But what does it mean to keep groups separate physically by relegating them to certain parts of the world? I gain insight by reading *The Color of Water* (1996), a memoir by James McBride, a bi-racial man, who interviews Ruth, his Jewish mother. Ruth, who severed ties with her family long before McBride was born, describes her father:

> He trusted no one. He thought black folks were always trying to steal from him. He'd sit my mother next to the door and say in Yiddish, "Watch the shvartses." He was robbing these folks blind, charging them a hundred percent markup on his cheap goods, and he was worried about them stealing from him! (p. 44)

What damage do we do to our souls in maintaining this physical separation? How might we live our lives differently if we opened ourselves to *others* instead of keeping them on the outside? Would we feel more whole if we joined with "the *other* half?"

The reality of segregation, of physically separating students of color from white students, lives on. But regardless of the physical separation of students, the make-up of the teaching force and the changing demographics of student populations tell us that white teachers will soon encounter students of color in their classroom. How these teachers perceive students of backgrounds different from their own can affect student achievement (Ladson-Billings, 2004).

When I read the literature on school achievement and on teacher attitudes, I am reminded of what my African American student is told by her counselor. The words ring in my ear like a siren, alerting me to the dangers and harsh realities of the school context: "Well, your grades are good for a Black student." When I think about this statement, I cannot help but wonder how many times it has been said. How many dreams have been deferred because of a counselor's biased expectations of student achievement? How many students have heard these words and believed that their success is regarded differently than that of their white peers? How many have let go of their dreams and have silently acquiesced by staying in their lower track classes, abandoning the opportunities that Advanced Placement classes offer?

Delpit (1995) maintains that children of color do not have the power to define themselves: "It is others who determine how they should act, how they are to be judged" (p. xv). Poor children and children of color are *othered* in the classroom because they do not possess societal power. While this lack of power is structural, it translates into individual attitudes among teachers that can shape the student-teacher relationship as well as student performance.

Fletcher (1999) explains the distinction between oppression and individual acts of prejudice or discrimination:

> …group social power-over involves the power of the privileged or dominant group to reward, punish, grant, withhold or take away something of value. Both prejudice and bigotry are individual concepts involving the process of selective perception and stereotyping; whereas, oppression is a group concept that involves individual prejudice and/or bigotry as well as group social power-over. (p. 97)

Oppression is perpetuated in part by internalized oppression, which can take the form of holding oneself back or holding others back as individuals struggle to survive in a world of privilege. Fletcher's distinction takes me back to Pecola, dirt poor with skin so dark even her African American peers mistreat her, and suffering from oppression that maintains her existence "at the hem of life" (Morrison, 1970, p. 17), always on the periphery looking in. But Pecola is a victim of internalized oppression as well as oppression by those who have power-over. Pecola has internalized the ugliness that her fellow Blacks project on her. Her Blackness, her ugliness, represent a level of separation from society, a level of poverty that is so frightening to her Black peers that they must distance themselves from her by hating her.

To understand the various faces of oppression, I move from Pecola to W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/1961) who reflects on his marginalized existence at the hands of the dominant group:

> Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house? The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all: walls strait and stubborn to the whitest, but relentlessly narrow, tall, and unscalable to sons of night who must plod darkly on in resignation, or beat unavailing palms against the stone, or steadily, half hopelessly, watch the streak of blue above. (p. 16)

Du Bois describes what it is like to belong to a subordinate group, with dreams deferred. Ellison (1952) captures the dominant/subordinate relationship through his character the Invisible Man, who explains the source of his invisibility:

> I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me…When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me….That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their *inner* eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. (p. 3)

As I listen to the stories of students and teachers, I hear individual voices and experiences, but I remain mindful that these stories do not take place in a vacuum; Pecola, Du Bois, and the Invisible Man did not come upon their circumstances by chance.

Moving forward, I think back to Delpit's notion of reflection, wondering about the source of biased perceptions. What, for example, leads my neighbor to question, on more than one occasion, why a Black man has come to her door? How would she respond if a white man were to knock on her door? In order to reflect on our experiences of *othering,* we must examine the roots of our biases, including the messages from our youth.

Limiting **Others'** *Dreams: Learning Early to Oppress*

Human relations expert Jane Elliot explores the phenomenon of moving from *other* to *otherer*—from target to perpetrator—in experiments she conducts throughout the United States. The educational video *Eye of the Storm* documents Jane Elliot's (1970) first experiment on the topic of discrimination. In 1970, Elliot conducted an experiment with her all white, all Christian third grade class. Elliot divided her

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students by eye color in what became known as the blue eyed/brown eyed experiment. On one day she established the blue-eyed students as superior, creating rules for what the blue-eyed students could do and the brown-eyed students could not do. To firmly establish this difference, she made the brown-eyed students wear paper collars around their necks. On the next day, Elliot changed the rules and informed the class that she had lied the previous day, that actually brown-eyed people were superior. With exhilaration and speed, the brown-eyed students took their collars off and placed them on the blue-eyed students. Over the course of the day, they treated the blue-eyed students as they had themselves been treated the day before. Seemingly without hesitation, these youth happily changed roles from target to perpetrator and enjoyed their superior role, despite how this new role made blue-eyed students feel. Was this just a game for the students?

Most relevant for educators was the academic performance of the young students in Elliot's experiment. When wearing collars, students performed significantly worse on a phonics exercise than they did when they were collar-free. If such a result is achieved from a simple experiment, can we even imagine the impact on students who are *othered* on a daily basis, on students who cannot take their collar off at the end of the day and say, "Thank goodness that's over!" And what do teachers do with their own "collars?" How do their "collars" shape who they connect with in class? At one point on the second day, Elliot (1970) says, "I hate today because I have blue eyes. This isn't funny. It isn't fun. It's a nasty word called discrimination."

Discrimination comes from the Latin *discriminare*, "to divide," dating back to 1628. The adverse meaning, which is usually racial, was first recorded in 1866 in American English. Difference is from the Latin *differre*, meaning "to set apart." Given these etymologies, it is no surprise that discrimination generally results from differences between people. Discrimination divides a society into those who have power and privilege and those who do not. Elliot intentionally divided the class in two, creating a system of oppression that students willingly and quickly adopted when in the role of oppressor. But why did they adopt this role so quickly? Why were they so willing to move from target to perpetrator when given the opportunity? What is it like to experience prejudice or discrimination and then to experience power? The Elliot experiment clarified how power relations are created in society, but are there different ways of defining power and envisioning sources of and uses for power?

Some might suggest that the results of the experiment are due to the age of the students. However, Elliot has found very similar results when conducting the experiment with adults. In *Eye of the Beholder* (1989), Elliot performs her experiment with white men and women and men and women of color. In this case, there is no need for collars; the people of color know they have been wearing collars all of their lives. The experiment is set up to provide white participants with insight into the experience of the *other*. It is a visibly troubling experience for one white woman who tries to leave. In the experiment, the people of color accept their role as oppressor without hesitation. What does it mean when power shifts, when one has power and then that power is taken away, or one with no power suddenly finds him or herself in

a position of power? How would power feel different if it were not part of a zero-sum game?

The Unlearning Process: Realizing the Universality of Bias and of Dreams

When should we begin discussing prejudice and discrimination with young children? Like Jane Elliot's experiment, Dr. Seuss' *The Sneetches* (1961) reminds us that even young children are capable of relating to the notions of inclusion and exclusion.

> Now, the Star-Belly Sneetches
> Had bellies with stars.
> The Plain-Belly Sneetches
> Had none upon thars.
>
> Those stars weren't so big. They were really so small
> You might think such a thing wouldn't matter at all.
> But, because they had stars, all the Star-Belly Sneetches
> Would brag, "We're the best kind of Sneetch on the beeches.
> With their snoots in the air, they would sniff and they'd snort
> "We'll have nothing to do with the Plain-Belly sort!"
> And whenever they met some, when they were out walking,
> They'd hike right on past them without even talking.
>
> When the Star-Belly children went out to play ball,
> Could a Plain Belly get in the game…? Not at all.
> You only could play if your bellies had stars
> And the Plain Belly children had none upon thars. (pp. 3-5)

For Dr. Seuss, *othering* manifests as being left out of a game or being ignored, events that are common childhood experiences. But underlying these seemingly common experiences, lies the devastating mark of difference. Dr. Seuss turns the symbol of a star, which Hilter used during the Holocaust to mark undesirables, into a symbol worn by those in power. And as a source of power, the star is equally divisive. Regardless of the meaning of the star in different contexts, when used to divide, it becomes socially destructive.

In *The Sneetches*, those without stars pay to have stars put on their bellies. In response, those with stars, seeking to remain distinct and, therefore, superior, pay to have their stars removed. *Dr.* Seuss emphasizes the desperation that *others* can feel when living in an oppressive environment, a desperation that manifests as internalized oppression, leading a Jewish person to "fix" their nose or a light skinned Black person to "pass" in order to be closer to the "norm." Kaye/Kantrowitz (1996) speaks of this process, identifying the desire to want a nose job as an indicator of the complexity and confusion surrounding being Jewish as an identity:

> When I was growing up in Flatbush (in Brooklyn, NY), every girl with a certain kind of nose…wanted a nose job. What was wrong with the original nose, the Jewish one?…Nose jobs are performed so that a Jewish woman does not look like a Jew. (p. 123)

Like the star, the "Jewish nose" is a mark in society, one that Jews themselves have decided needs to be changed, as a result of not fitting the norm of whiteness.

But Dr. Seuss (1961) gives us a way out of *othering*. He concludes his story with a lesson so simple that children can understand it, yet so complex that adults cannot adhere to it:

> I'm quite happy to say
> That the Sneetches got really quite smart on that day,
> The day they decided that Sneetches are Sneetches
> And no kind of Sneetch is the best on the beaches.
> That day, all the Sneetches forgot about stars
> And whether they had one, or not, upon thars. (p. 24)

Dr. Seuss presents the ideal, a world in which it doesn't matter whether our students are gay or straight, whether they are native speakers or English Language Learners, whether they come from a poor family or a wealthy one. But should we forget about our stars? Is this what we strive to achieve in the classroom? Dr. Seuss' point is clear:

regardless of how we look, we are all the same, so let's treat one an*other* as equals. This is at its core a desirable notion, but as teachers we do not want to ignore the differences among our students. We do not want to engage a colorblind approach in which we say, "I don't see color in my classroom." In fact, we are not all the same and our differences are connected to our life experiences and to social realities. The challenge for teachers is to present difference as positive instead of *other*.

If we instill in our children an understanding of what it means to be human, to be part of a community, to have dreams just like everyone else, can we as educators contribute to all of our students pursuing their dreams? To help me further unpack what it means to be both *other* and *otherer*, I turn to the stories of Judy and Jaime, two teachers whose voices illuminate what can transpire when power dynamics shift.

Voices Along the Way

What are the different ways in which we experience being a target, and how does being a target influence our role as perpetrator? We can gain insight into this phenomenon by listening to the lived experiences of those who have found themselves in both of these roles. For a preliminary conversation to explore this phenomenon, two teachers, Judy and Jaime, agree to open up to me, digging into painful memories, times they would perhaps prefer to forget. Judy is a former elementary school teacher whose focus is literacy. Jaime is a former high school teacher. Both teachers come to conversations around *othering* with a commitment to social justice.

Being* Othered*: Feeling the Threat of a Dream Deferred

In listening to Judy and Jaime, bold themes emerge from their experiences as *other*. Place appears a factor in marking difference, returning us to the notion of "matter out of place." The linkage between our emotions and our actions arises as a second theme in the experiences of Judy and Jaime as *other*. Does how we respond to our emotions as *other* relate to our actions as *otherer*? Exploring these themes and the voices around them adds new dimensions to the discussion of *othering,* preparing me as I look ahead to the conversations with my study participants.

Space: A place to house our dreams?

How does place contribute to an individual becoming a target? Are children more likely to be *othered* when their identity is not largely represented in their community? Place seems to be a common theme in experiences of being a target of prejudice and discrimination.

> I remember clearly the first time that I was different and that I was
> being ostracized was when I was 10 and we had just come to the
> United States. It was a combination of my Australian identity that was
> a target of teasing and ridicule by other children and also my Jewish
> identity because we moved to a neighborhood that was predominantly
> Catholic, and I remember being criticized and sort of ridiculed for
> keeping Kosher. I remember a neighbor saying in this very sort of
> nasty tone, "That's ridiculous!" when I said I couldn't eat what she
> had given me… (Judy)

Judy was out of place in her new environment. Her position of being out of place was firmly established by those who identified how she was different from them; they targeted her because of these differences.

Jaime, a biracial woman who identifies as African American, had a similar experience when she moved to a predominantly white community as a young child,

but Jaime's position as a biracial child raises the complexities around our social identities.

> When I was eight we moved to Ryesdale and we were probably the only black family in a predominantly white neighborhood. At Ryesdale elementary school I think there were 3 African American families. And then in the middle of 3rd or 4th grade they started bussing so more African American kids came from a lot of section 8 housing…I was smart…and I spoke "white" and I got a lot of flack from the African American community. So, I really felt rejected because that was the community I most connected to. I didn't necessarily always feel connected to the white community, although I had white friends as well. It was a constant back and forth and negotiation of different communities and such and feeling othered by both communities. (Jaime)

How is our identity formed, and how is it transformed in the process of being *othered*? The concept of identity is complex. Our ientities are shaped by our individual characteristics, our family, history and social and political contexts: "Who am I? The answer depends in large part on who the world around me says I am" (Tatum, 2000, p. 8).

In *Just Walk on By* (2005), Staples reflects on his ability to alter space as a Black male. He recalls at age 22 the reactions he encountered on Chicago's streets, and later in New York where he worked as a journalist:

> At dark, shadowy intersections in Chicago, I could cross in front of a car stopped at a traffic light and elicit the thunk, thunk, thunk, thunk, of the driver—black, white, male, female—hammering down the door locks…In time, I learned to smother the rage I felt at so often being taken for a criminal. (pp. 166, 168)

Staples acknowledges that women who walk by him clutching their purses and bracing themselves against attack are particularly vulnerable to street violence. He comments, "Yet these truths are no solace against the kind of alienation that comes

from being ever the suspect, against being set apart, a fearsome entity with whom pedestrians avoided making eye contact" (p. 166).

In *He Defies You Still* (1995), Tommi Avicolli writes of a similar feeling of loneliness being known as a "sissy" in school and suffering ongoing harassment because of this label:

> School was one of the more painful experiences of my youth. The neighborhood bullies could be avoided…But school was something I had to face day after day for some two hundred mornings a year. I had few friends in school. I was a pariah. Some kids would talk to me, but few wanted to be known as my close friend. Afraid of labels. If I was a sissy, then they had to be a sissy, too. I was condemned to loneliness. (p. 232)

These testimonials articulate the emotional consequences resulting from how society views and labels that which they perceive to be different. Our social identities follow us, whether we own them or not, and shape our actions and reactions, as well as those whom we encounter.

In Western societies, our self-identities are largely formed during adolescence. These identities are based on childhood experiences, but during adolescence we develop the cognitive ability to reflect on the self. The experiences and choices made regarding our identity during adolescence resonate throughout the rest of our lives (Tatum, 2000). But we do not develop our identity in isolation. Erikson notes that "Identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them" (Erikson, 1968, p. 22). Thus, we are not the sole source of our identity construction. Our position in society as a member of either a dominant or subordinate social group

determines our *social* identity. But what does it mean to have a social identity and a self-identity? W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/1961) speaks of this process as double-consciousness:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (pp. 16-17)

How do we negotiate the worlds of agency (what we can determine for ourselves) and structure (the limits that are set for us by society)? For Jaime identity meant moving between different worlds based on how each group viewed her.

When one is numerically in the minority, it is easier to be identified as someone who is different. Who determines which person belongs in what space and how that space should be defined? Generally, it is the dominant social group who makes this determination. "Dominant groups, by definition, set the parameters within which the subordinates operate" (Tatum, 2000, p. 11). For both Judy and Jaime, feeling out of place was a consequence of being members of subordinate groups and being targeted for this membership.

The popular television show *Lost* complicates my understanding of the role of place in *othering*. *Lost* pits two groups of people against each other, and place figures prominently in everyone's lives. There are the survivors of a plane crash desperate to get off the island. And, there are the *others*, a collection of people who live on the island and do not want to leave. How did the inhabitants come to be the *others* when they dominate the island? The *others* inhabited the island long before anyone else.

Decades ago, a group of scientists came to the island. The *others* killed this group, and at that time assumed the name "*other.*" The show pits good against evil and constantly leads the viewer to question who and what are good. *Other* clearly represents evil to the survivors, though some *others* are capable of crossing over to their side.

Lost raises questions about what it means to be *other.* The *others* are at home on the island but still bear the name *other*, despite the fact that they view the survivors as intruders. Is *other* a permanent label, regardless of one's condition and location? *Lost* challenges the notion that one is no longer *other* when at home. The show also challenges the idea that being an *other* is in any way related to being a numerical minority. And what about the *others* who cross over, joining the survivors? Many survivors question their intentions and do not trust them. Is it possible for one who is identified as an outsider to join an insider group? And, is there a place to reside that is not us or them? On *Lost,* one woman who has been on the island for 16 years and is separate from the *others,* chooses not to affiliate with either group. Is there a way for us to think about people beyond the us/them, insider/outsider dichotomy?

On *Lost* there is a desperate struggle revolving around place. The survivors feel out of place on the island, and the *others* feel threatened by the notion of having to leave. Casey (1993) writes about such place-panic:

> The prospect of no-place is dismaying not only when pulling up stakes or in wartime…but many other times: indeed, every time we are out of place, whether we are lost in a snowstorm, or our house has burned down, or we are simply without lodging for the night. In such situations we find ourselves entering into a special form of panic: place-panic. For we

confront the imminent possibility of there being no place to be or to go. (p. xi)

Having a place gives a sense of security, of belonging, a home. Morrison (1970) discusses place in different terms, distinguishing between being "put out" and "put outdoors:"

> There is a difference between being put *out* and being put out*doors*. If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go. The distinction was subtle but final. Outdoors was the end of something, an irrevocable, physical fact, defining and complementing our metaphysical condition…She [Pecola] came with nothing. No little paper bag with the other dress, or a nightgown, or two pair of whitish cotton bloomers. (pp. 17-18)

The threat of being outdoors in *The Bluest Eye* signals extreme poverty, circumstances so dire that people long to own property and work hard to see the day that they can. When Pecola's father burns down his house and ends up in jail, with his family outdoors, his wife and children become examples of that which is most despised and feared among the Black community. Throughout *The Bluest Eye* Pecola's family represents the level of poverty that everyone fears. While many in the novel live with this fear, the Breedloves embody the fear. They are the benchmark above which all must strive to live, for no one wants to experience the dread of place-panic.

If we can feel "out of" place, what does it feel like to be "in" place? What is home? Is home a house? Is it a community where we feel we belong? As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Slovakia, when I told people I was going home, what did I mean? I didn't have a physical home. I was referring to my town, the place where I could find my family and friends, the place where I felt welcome. But is home ever the same once we've left? How does our identity change when we leave home? Hall

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(1999) writes, "It is assumed that cultural identity is fixed by birth, part of nature, imprinted through kinship and lineage in the genes, constitutive of our innermost selves. It is impermeable to something as 'worldly', secular and superficial as temporarily moving one's place of residence" (p. 3). Referring to the Caribbean diaspora who return home, he notes, "They are happy to be home, but history has somehow irrevocably intervened" (1999, p. 3). Home has changed beyond recognition. What do we do with the resulting sense of dis-location?

What does home provide? Safety? Security? A sense of belonging? What happens when we don't feel like we have a home? What are the consequences when, as a child, we do not feel safe or at home in our school or in our community? How does this affect our self-esteem, our academic performance, or our opinion of *others*?

Bachelard (1994) writes:

> The house we were born in is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams. Each one of its nooks and corners was a resting-place for daydreaming….There exists for each one of us…a house of dream-memory…. (p. 15)

What happens, then, when that home is no longer safe? What happens to our dreams? Do they become deferred? Do they disappear as if they never occurred, or does our dream-memory retain them in the hope that one day we will once again find the safety of home? And what would it take to make schools a place of safe harbor so the Tommi Avicollis in our schools would find in school a home away from home, a place where dreaming is encouraged?

Reacting to the realization of difference, to the dream deferred.

When made to feel different because of who we are, we often experience a range of emotions. The first emotion may be hurt or sadness. Hurt can turn to anger.

Sometimes this transformation occurs quickly; other times it can take months or even years. In Judy's case, the emotions were almost simultaneous: "I remember feeling very sort of hurt and angry at the same time."

In Jaime's case, she felt *othered* as a senior in high school when she shared with her white classmates which prestigious colleges had accepted her. When they responded by commenting that she got in because she was Black, she experienced the following emotions: "Angry. I was sad and angry. First sad. Rejected. I felt rejected. Then angry… I felt so *othered*. I don't know how you define *othered* and alienation, but it was such an alienating experience" (Jaime).

What do we do with the emotions that arise when we are targeted? How do they manifest in our lives? Do they disappear or remain with us for long periods of time, "fester[ing] like a sore" (Hughes, 1959/1990, p. 268)? Do we choose to ignore them, or do we allow them to drive our actions? Emotions are powerful and can speak volumes about the significance of events in our lives. Emotions connect us to our past and, like our sense of smell, can evoke memories that feel like they occurred just yesterday. Hate can become a response to having been hated. Stern-LaRosa and Bettmann (2000) note that at times the only way to respond to hate is to feel the hurt, absorb the anger, and feel anger and hate toward the haters. They acknowledge that righteous indignation felt by those who are systematically oppressed can be healthy, but making that one's only response to hate is not.

How we respond to being *othered* varies depending on our context. At times, we stand up for ourselves, and in other instances we remain silent and hope the moment will pass. The depth of emotion we feel in a given incident may determine

our actions. For Judy, the experience of being an *other* resulted in altered relationships: "It changed the relationship completely. It made me realize that these people don't understand me. I'm not like them. They don't know who I am and they never will."

In addition to affecting Judy's relationships, her experiences of being an *other* transformed how she presented herself. As a result of being teased for her Australian accent, she changed her accent very quickly. Within six months her accent was completely gone. Losing her accent was a way to deal with being *othered*: " I remember feeling that I hated America. I didn't like the life here….Giving up the accent was a coping mechanism. I never gave up the identity" (Judy). Judy did not give up her identity, but part of her identity became a secret. With the obvious manifestation of that identity, her accent, gone, people could not tell that she was different. She was able to hide what made her different in this respect and reveal it when she wished.

Similarly, Jaime's experiences as a child and as an adult resulted in changed behaviors. By the time she got to college, she describes herself as having become very anti-white:

> I was so full of hate and anger and rage and I still remember that. I
> remember, I can directly relate being othered and alienated from the
> high school experience of "Oh, you just got in because you're black,"
> to total rejection of the white community and the white world. It
> rocked me to the core because all of a sudden I was not their equal but
> I was lesser, to going into a very militant, very anti-white period.
> (Jaime)

Stern-LaRosa and Bettmann (2000) warn that hatred toward those who have hurt you can become all consuming and self-destructive. For a period of time, Jaime

experienced this extreme response. Jaime's interactions led her to distance herself and disconnect from those who *othered* her. Tatum (2000) writes that subordinates often develop covert ways of resisting or undermining the power of the dominant group. While Jaime's attitude may have been more overt than covert, her process of disconnecting, which continues today when *othered*, is a form of covert resistance to the limits set by dominant groups. When describing being *othered* by her African American community because she does not share their Christian beliefs, she observes that she responds by withdrawing from the relationship: "If you're Christian I have no problem with that, but they have the problem with me…As soon as the conversation goes that way and I feel *othered*, I pull back" (Jaime).

Is this change in relationship what a perpetrator hopes for or expects when they *other* someone? Is this distance their end goal? While reactions to being targeted certainly vary, isolation, whether self-imposed or imposed by the perpetrator, is frequently the result. As teachers, what does it mean when we see children being isolated in class? How do we respond? Do young children *feel* powerless? Is power that is related to identity something educators can mitigate in the classroom? What is an educator's responsibility in this arena?

Becoming an **Otherer***: Contributing to the Dream Deferred*

This study explores the nature of our relations with one an*other* around difference. It is based on the premise that we all are capable of hurting one an*other*. Reflecting on the times we have *othered* can be difficult. In fact, I have found that many students and teachers cannot think of a time they have hurt someone not like them. I assure them that with enough reflection, their story will emerge. Naming and

owning the ways in which we have caused *others* pain, while not easy, is essential in

breaking down the cycle of hate. In my conversations with Judy and Jaime, themes of

power, shame, and choice reveal themselves, furthering my questioning around

othering.

Power and the dream.

Where does power come from and why do we need it? Do we all have power

in society? Can marginalized groups have power? Because we have multiple

identities, we may find that we simultaneously belong to both dominant and targeted

groups. Audre Lourde notes:

> Somewhere, on the edge of consciousness, there is what I call a
> *mythical* norm, which each one of us within our hearts knows "that is
> not me." In America, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male,
> young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure. It is within this
> mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within society. (as
> cited in Tatum, 2000, p. 11)

As a Black, lesbian, feminist, Lorde continues by observing that while she is not the

norm in terms of race, gender or sexual orientation, she is still capable of oppressing

others based on "distortions around difference." Our multiple identities may present

at times as dominant. It is easy to fall into the victim role and forget that those of us

who are targets also have the capacity to oppress *others*. In some instances, when a

target of prejudice or discrimination perceives him or herself to be in a position of

relative power over a person or group, he or she acts as a perpetrator. Hall (1997)

refers to the circularity of power: "….everyone—the powerful and the powerless—is

caught up, *though not on equal terms*, in power's circulation. No one—neither its

apparent victims nor its agents—can stand wholly outside its field of operation" (p.

261).

In my conversations with Judy and Jaime, place seems to factor again into the equation of hate. As a Jewish woman, Judy faces anti-Semitism in the United States, but not in Israel. When she travels to Israel, her position is quite different. She doesn't feel like an outsider in Israel: "On all my trips to Israel, I feel like I'm home….I never feel like I'm an outsider in Israel" (Judy). In Israel, it is Arabs and Palestinians, identified by their dress or the expression on their face, whom Judy perceives to be the outsider, the *other*. Location can give us a sense of power. In Israel, Judy feels power as a Jewish woman in a society in which Jews are the dominant group. In the U.S., Judy does not have power in terms of her religious and/or ethnic identity. How does our sense of self, our sense of who we are and who *others* are, change as our place changes? Crossing an international border changes how Judy perceives herself in relation to *others*. Crossing borders reveals the "relational, constructed, and situated nature of one's own politics and personal investments" (Giroux, 1992, p. 35). As I cross borders, my engagement with *others* changes depending on my personal politics and my relationships.

But one need not cross a physical border to change location and feel power. When I enter a reform synagogue in the United States, I know that I will not be *othered* for being Jewish. While I may not have power over anyone in the synagogue I visit, my sense of being Jewish changes during my time there. I feel a heightened sense of self and a stronger sense of community. As I step out of the synagogue, I know that my social identity as a religious/ethnic *other* is put on me once again, whether I own it or not. I am not the norm, whether I buy into that belief or not. But

crossing borders can have a very different effect. Crossing borders in the classroom, I am introduced to new narratives through the voices of my students.

On one occasion, Judy used her perceived power to *other* a Palestinian taxi driver who pulled up where she was waiting. "Do we want to get in this car? He's Palestinian" she asked her friend. The driver responded to what he overheard by venting and yelling at Judy after she and her friend decided to get in the car.

Was Judy's comment a remark made in passing related to her concern about security, or was it an attempt to *other*? What was behind her words? "I was a little afraid and I was also just being obnoxious. Just kind of being a smart ass…I felt like I was cool. This is my country. He doesn't belong here. I don't want to get in his car" (Judy). Judy felt power as a person who belonged to the majority group, the power to say "yes" or "no" to the taxi driver, the power to decide whether he would get a fare, whether he would make enough money that day to put food on his family's table. Often, being part of a majority includes taking on the characteristics of majority status. Being cool, being a smart ass, being obnoxious are all ways of demonstrating one's superior status. But what happens when that status is challenged? What happens when the target's anger manifests itself verbally, as the taxi driver's did, or even physically? In confronting his *otherness*, the taxi driver engages in a power struggle, as if to say, "I know what you're doing. You cannot *other* me!" But in doing so, does he risk *othering* Judy? Does our angered response prompt us to *other*? In describing his existence as a feared Black male, Staples (2005) writes that he had to stifle his anger at frequently being taken for a criminal: "Not to do so would surely have led to

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madness" (p. 168). Should we smother our anger in order to prevent ourselves from participating in the vicious cycle of hate?

Jaime recently found herself *othering* a young white woman whom she describes as "young, and country, and just loud and ignorant." Jaime was chairing a panel at a conference on which the young woman was presenting and found herself discounting the woman's ideas because she lacked a critical perspective. As the panel chair, and as an older and more educated woman than the panelist, Jaime found herself in a position of power, despite the fact that Jaime is African American and the panelist was white. Her location allowed her to *other* this woman. Later at a restaurant Jaime continued to other the woman: "She was sitting next to me and I essentially ignored her the entire time. I think she was eager to talk and I kept redirecting and talking to other people because I didn't want to talk to her" (Jaime).

In these border crossings the margin becomes the center and the center the margin. These positions, these relations of power become fluid, shifting based on one's location. Stuart Hall (1999) speaks of borders and boundaries in his discussion of the Caribbean diasporic experience. A limited understanding of the diaspora rests on the construction of an insider/outsider binary. But, Caribbean identity is complex and requires a different conception of difference. Hall uses Derrida's notion of *differance*, differences that do not manifest as binaries, to understand the diaspora. Caribbean cultural identity includes "veiled boundaries that do not finally separate but double up as *places of passage*, and meanings that are positional and relational, always on the slide along a spectrum without an end or beginning" (p. 7). Differences cannot be fixed; we must consider the in-between.

We can certainly argue that Jaime will never be in a position of social power as a Black woman in the United States, because of the dynamics of race, but at this conference she held relative power and was able to *other* a woman who was younger and less educated. Given these power shifts, it is not surprising that those who do not have traditional power in society may find themselves in the role of perpetrator.

Where does our power come from? For Judy, in the context of Israel, being an Arab and being an outsider means, "That they hate me and want to hurt me and should be avoided" (Judy). How does fear give us a sense of power, and how does fear play into our role as perpetrator? Does a culture of fear drive a society to create policies that *other* marginalized groups, and as individuals do we act on our fears by *othering* those who are different from us? Jaime recounts a story about a conversation with friends:

> I don't know if I ever told you the 9/11 story…I was at my friend's house. She's Salvadorian-American and her boyfriend is African American and white but considers himself African American. He has been pulled over so many times for [the] driving while black syndrome, yet he was advocating for a system in which...and it blew my mind that here he is a 31-year-old black man who's so aware of it…you can't be a black man and not be aware of it, it's constantly in your face, the daily injustices, and he's advocating for that against Arab Americans…I brought it to his attention and he felt justified.

Do we feel our biased thoughts and discriminatory behaviors are justified because of our fear? Fear, anger, and ignorance have been identified as reasons why people hate (Stern-La Rosa & Bettmann, 2000), but where does this fear come from? Certainly the media as well as foreign and domestic policies, such as the Patriot Act, foster a culture of fear, but shouldn't our ability to question what we hear and to think

critically allow common sense to prevail? Why do we give in to our fears instead of confronting them?

In the controversial movie *Bowling for Columbine* (Tichy, 2002), director Michael Moore establishes media-driven fear as the reason many Americans own guns**.** Fear can be omnipresent and all-consuming, controlling our thoughts and actions. Following 9/11, we were instantly taught to fear anyone who looks Arab or Muslim. At an anti-bias workshop, I listen in disbelief as my Pakistani-American co-facilitator, Aban, arrives late and tells the group that he had been pulled over on the highway. When approached by the officer, he is asked, "Where are you from?" Aban responds without thinking, "Pakistan." The officer asks to see Aban's passport, to which he responds, "I don't have a passport with me. I'm American but born in Pakistan." The officer's fear spills over, drenching Aban, leading him to respond with fear. Eventually, he shows the officer the agenda for the workshop, for which he is now late, and is let go. He is never told why he was pulled over. Aban stuns the group further by sharing a time immediately following 9/11 when he is asked to get off a plane because he was making a white woman seated near him very nervous. Aban, being a gentle soul, complies. Those of us listening to his story, non-Muslim, non-Arab, non-targeted, do not understand his compliance. Aban's life is controlled by the fear of those he encounters, at least until society decides his "kind" is no longer a threat and selects another group to isolate.

Apple (2006) refers to fear as a force in the neoconservative thrust in educational policy: "Behind it as well—and this is essential—is a fear of the "Other," fears that have been exacerbated and often cynically employed for political

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purposes…since September 11" (p. 29). This fear has led to attacks on multiculturalism and bilingualism, as well as the drive for national standards. How can teachers reduce the society-induced fear, their own as well as their students', that enters the classroom?

To understand what it means to fear something mythical, I turn to etymology. Fear comes from the Old Norse *far,* meaning harm, distress, deception. To what extent is our fear based on deception as opposed to real harm? Do we trick ourselves into believing that someone should be feared? What if we took the mask off our fear and revealed our self-deception? How might we respond? The base of the word fear is *per*, which means to try, risk, come over, or go through. Might this suggest that we should, in fact, risk facing that which we fear most? If we tried to engage with the *other,* what would we find? What do we have to lose in trying to "go through" our fear and "come over" to the *other*, encountering her or him as friend instead of foe?

What is power and how does it manifest in the classroom? Foucault (1976/1993) writes, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere…Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (p. 518). Foucault advances the notion of power linked to knowledge. Knowledge is a form of power, but power also exists in the places and situations in which knowledge is applied. When schools limit knowledge to the content of tests, they exhibit their power.

How do teachers present knowledge? Is knowledge truth? Foucault (1980) speaks of "regimes of truth" as opposed to absolute truth:

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (p. 131)

For example, it may or may not be true that students from low-income homes cannot achieve in school what students from wealthy homes can achieve. But, if schools and society believe that these students cannot do well in school, and limit the opportunities of these students through mechanisms such as tracking and resource allocation, the truth will become "real" through its effects.

According to Kreisberg (1992), the "regime of truth" in Western societies is maintained through the dominant discourse of power as power-over, revealed in relationships of domination, which are characterized by inequality. But, he notes, regimes of truth are not permanent; they change over time. Kreisberg presents the notion of power-with to address the limits of power-over and to challenge current regimes of truth:

> Power-with is manifest in *relationships of co-agency*. These relationships are characterized by people finding ways to satisfy their desires and fulfill their interests without imposing on one another. The relationship of co-agency is one in which there is equality: situations in which individuals and groups fulfill their desires by acting together…The possibility for *power with* lies in the reality of human interconnections within communities. (pp. 85-86)

What are the possibilities for student experience and performance when a teacher approaches the classroom with this conception of power?

In *Oxydol Poisoning* (1996) Earl Jackson describes his experience being persecuted in high school for being smart and for being gay, an experience that was

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significantly exacerbated when his gym teacher decided to take the class to the

auditorium to "teach Jackson how to walk and act like a man" (p. 182):

> Needless to say, the news of the incident in the auditorium spread
> throughout the school, and open season was declared on me. The
> student monitors were among my most violent attackers, and the
> teachers on duty were often "jock" types who pretended they thought
> this [harassment] was innocent horseplay in which I was participating
> and finding as funny as everyone else. Like my family, the school was
> an institution of arbitrary but rigidly enforced discipline that
> paradoxically offered no real protection or security. Hallways were
> monitored heavily, and movement was severely restricted…Whenever
> I eluded my attackers by going upstairs or using an emergency exit, I
> was subject to disciplinary write-ups and detention, if caught. (p. 183)

Jackson lived a life subjected to power-over. His teacher exerted power-over by

making him the object of ridicule, and the school policies implemented power-over

by controlling his movements and punishing him for breaking the rules. Eventually,

Jackson was expelled, a victim of the regime of truth that had determined he was "a

detriment to the morale of the school" (p. 185). How might Jackson have experienced

school differently if the school had cultivated power-with? And how might the

teachers and administrators of the school have viewed and interacted with Jackson

differently?

Power in schools is displayed in school policies and in the actions of teachers

and administrators. But power shows itself in the curriculum as well. The curriculum,

both overt and hidden, provides a mechanism for ideological control. Through

curriculum, schools perpetuate cultural hegemony, which Giroux (1980) explains as

"a form of ideological control in which dominant beliefs, values, and social practices

are produced and distributed throughout a whole range of institutions, such as

schools, the family, mass media, and trade unions" (p. 228). In describing how

hegemony functions in curriculum, Giroux suggests an analysis of four interrelated areas of schooling: 1) the selection of culture deemed legitimate; 2) the categories establishing certain cultural content as superior or inferior; 3) the legitimation of certain classroom relationships, such as teacher-student relations reflecting a power-over approach; and 4) the distribution of, and access to, culture and knowledge across classes. Giroux argues that an analysis of hegemony in schools allows for an understanding of how power and dominance are produced, as well as how they can be challenged through resistance, critique, and social action. Giroux's areas of analysis return us to the notion of a dream deferred. Whose power/knowledge is valued in the classroom? Whose dreams are furthered and whose are stifled through the production and reproduction of meta-narratives that ignore the lives of so many students?

> McLaren (1988) advocates moving beyond an analysis of ideological control:

> Our central concern should not simply hinge upon whether or not the subjective "moment" of ideological production is subservient to, or dominated by, material and objective forces. What really matters is *the political project around which the concept of ideology can be put into practice.* (p. 176)

How do we turn our understanding of hegemony and dominance into a "project of possibility" (McLaren, 1988, p. 177)? In what ways do we transform our teaching practice to reflect a power-with approach, a desire to transform social structures and societal inequities, a need to see all dreams fulfilled?

Shame: Reflecting on our role in deferring another's dream.

When in a situation of relative power, how does it feel to exert that power? Do we feel justified in acting as a perpetrator? Do we feel shame? Or do we disconnect

from our emotions to make the process of *othering* that much easier? Judy explains

her feelings of shame when the taxi driver yelled at her for her comments:

> I felt shame. Shame because he heard me and because I had offended
> him and I felt foolish. I felt stupid. I remember feeling shame and
> embarrassment. It reminded me when I was in middle school and I was
> telling my mom a story that I thought was so funny and so cool about
> this new kid who was really fat and everyone was laughing at him, and
> I remember my mother looked at me and this was the only time she
> ever said this to me and I'll never forget it, she said "I am so ashamed
> of you"… She always said things like, "Why would you ever exclude
> someone when you can include? Why would you ever make someone
> feel bad if you can make them feel good? Why do that to a person?"
> …Clearly it was a similar kind of feeling of complete shame [in the
> taxi in Israel]. I had really humiliated somebody and denigrated
> somebody and it was shameful what I had done. For no good
> reason…He was just doing his job, which was to drive a taxi, and I
> thought I was being such a smart ass.
>
> There was a shift in power in that moment and I remember feeling that
> in a very few seconds I went from being the one in power and the one
> with the upper hand to the one being shamed. He took the power right
> back and stood up for himself and defended himself and made me look
> foolish. (Judy)

Judy's awareness of the power shift and her ability to connect to a childhood

incident allowed her to feel shame, just as I had felt shame when I *othered* two Roma

who walked by me on the street in Slovakia. But what do we learn from this shame?

What is shame? What purpose does it serve? Through shame we gain an

understanding of the limitations of our own freedom; our moral consciousness

emerges. "Freedom at the same time is *discovered* in the consciousness of shame and

is *concealed* in the shame itself" (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 84). My shame stirs my

consciousness, which welcomes the *other* (Levinas, 1961/1969). Realizing that the

other does not counter my resistance with even greater force, but brings into question

the right of my power, I come to understand that my power and freedom are arbitrary,

and my morality emerges. What choices do I make with this new understanding?

Choice: The power to further the dream.

Which Way Are You Goin'
Which way are you goin'
Which side will you be on
Will you stand and watch while all the seeds of hate are sown
Will you stand with those who say that His will be done
One hand on the Bible, one hand on the gun
One hand on the Bible, one hand on the gun

Which way are you looking?
Is it hard to see
Do you say what's wrong for him is not wrong for me
You walk the streets of righteousness
But you refuse to understand
You say you love the baby, but then you crucify the man
You say you love the baby, but then you crucify the man

Everyday things are changin'
Words once honored turn to lies
People wonderin' can you blame them
It's too far to run and too late to hide

Now you turn your back on all the things that you used to preach
Now it's let him live in freedom if he lives like me
Well your line has changed, confusion rings
What have you become
Your olive branches turn to spears when your flowers turn to guns
Your olive branches turn to spears when your flowers turn to guns
(Croce, 1975)

What drives us to choose the path of hate? When we act on our biases, do we

stop to think about the consequences of our actions? How might our actions be

different if we considered what it is like to walk in another's shoes? Jim Croce's

lyrics remind us that our actions are based on choices we make, and that these

choices, indeed, have consequences for us, as well as for those whom we o*ther*. In

choosing to *other* we may risk turning our backs on that which we used to preach. In

othering someone, we risk altering how they view their place in society, their sense of self, or their self-esteem.

Sartre (1977) espouses a philosophy of responsibility when he writes, "…one ought always to ask oneself what would happen if everyone did as one is doing…" (p. 31). His interpretation of responsibility is coupled with the notion of choice: "What is not possible is not to choose. I can always choose, but I must know that if I do not choose, that is still a choice" (Sartre, p. 48). Thus, he presents individuals as active, not passive. Sartre's words clarify what a teacher's biased action or inaction means in the classroom. The teacher who acts upon assumptions or passively remains silent in the face of prejudice actively silences the voices of her students. What would our classrooms look like, how would our students *feel*, if we always chose to act on ours and *others'* prejudices?

Moving From Target to Ally: Solidarity in Saving the Dream

How would society be different if people moved as easily from target to ally as they do from target to perpetrator? The term *ally* comes from the French *alier* (1297)*,* meaning to combine or unite. Sadly, there are not enough examples in society of individuals choosing to learn from their experience as an *other* and applying this experience to interactions with people who society perceives to be less than them in some way. Why don't people choose to unite? What determines whether someone will be an ally? Does it depend on personality? On the level of risk involved?

The film *Chocolat* (Weinstein, 2000) illustrates quite clearly the process of moving from target to ally. Vianne, the main character, is described by the townspeople of Lansquenet as "some kind of radical" and "an atheist" because she

opens a chocolate store at the beginning of Lent when the townspeople are told by the Church to avoid temptation, and because she does not go to Church.

While different from the townspeople, Vianne has an opportunity to work toward acceptance through her respectable occupation as storeowner. The town's sentiments toward outsiders emerge further when a group of River Gypsies arrives in the village on houseboats. They are named River rats by the town, a label which both serves to dehumanize the group of Roma and to remind the townspeople that this is a disease-carrying group.

The townspeople are reminded of their morality by persecuting the Roma and forcing them to leave. Their morality comes from the action of constructing an opposite, from rejecting that which they perceive is immoral. They separate people in the town by relying on binary oppositions: good vs. bad; clean vs. dirty; moral vs. immoral, which define each group. According to cultural anthropology, these binaries provide society with an understanding of the order of things (Hall, 1997). The townspeople need to get rid of the River Gypsies because they disturb the order. By living on boats and failing to maintain jobs or a lifestyle similar to the residents of Lansquenet, the River Gypsies have introduced "matter out of place;" they have broken the unwritten rules of society. When "matter is out of place" societies work to reestablish order by getting rid of the "matter," in an attempt to restore the "proper" or "normal" state of things. In *Chocolat*, this process consists of making the town and unwelcome place for the River Gypsies and forcing them to leave.

But Vianne rejects the limitations created by such binaries that delineate precise borders. She is a border crosser, existing in the in-between. A wanderer

herself, she knows well the role of the outsider in town. In rejecting the binaries, Vianne is able to live in two worlds, crossing back and forth, demonstrating the fallacy of the binary construction. Derrida (1972) explains binaries as representations of violent hierarchies. There are no neutral binaries. In refusing the established notion of binaries, Vianne reveals her desire to confront and dismantle the barriers that separate different groups in society.

Vianne does not fall into the pattern, which Sibley (1981) describes, of a deprived group appealing to the dominant group's interests when they feel threatened. As a social outcast she does not side with the collective interest of the townspeople with regard to the River Gypsies. She refuses to mistreat the Roma and intentionally befriends the Roma when they arrive in town. Vianne demonstrates that contrary to social models, individuals can demonstrate support for outsider groups in the face of a hostile community.

But what enables Vianne to be an ally when the rest of the townspeople refuse? Is it her experience as an *other* that gives her insight into the humanness of the Roma? How important is it that we reflect on the various roles we have played in the face of prejudice and discrimination? Is there value in teachers reflecting on times they have been a target, a perpetrator, or even a bystander and an ally? How might such reflection transform one's interaction with and understanding of one's students?

Drawing Meaning from our Transformations: Pedagogical Implications

You've Got to be Carefully Taught
You've got to be taught
To hate and fear,
You've got to be taught
From year to year,
It's got to be drummed

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In your dear little ear
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a diff'rent shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late,
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate,
You've got to be carefully taught!
(Rodgers & Hammerstein, 1949)

According to Stern-LaRosa and Bettmann (2000), noticing differences is biological, but forming attitudes about them is social. As early as age five, children may begin to show indications that they are developing negative attitudes toward difference. The period between the ages of six and eight seems to be a critical time for the outward expression of hate. Many children report having first encountered prejudice and discrimination between these ages (Stern & Bettmann). Prejudice is learned and can be unlearned, but where and when should the unlearning happen? And how can we help children unlearn prejudices if we don't first address our own? Where does awareness of our actions fit into the cycle of hate? What are the consequences for our students when we dismiss power relationships, which manifest as bullying, as part of growing up? Can reflecting on situations in which we have been an *other* and an *otherer* help an educator to identify and manage biases in the classroom?

Critical Reflection: Preparing Teachers to Teach for the Dream

To understand the relevance of critical reflection for classroom practice, I undertake a deeper examination of what it means to reflect critically. Critical

reflection involves an inward examination of one's individual beliefs about differences, where these beliefs come from, and how they shape our attitudes and actions. How can critical reflection as a process compel future teachers to see their students authentically?

In order to define critical reflection, a critical perspective needs to be considered in relation to other types of reflection. Many researchers turn to John Dewey as the originator of reflective teaching. Dewey (1933) envisioned reflective thought as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds supporting it and future conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). Reflection is, thus, an ongoing process that teachers should engage in throughout their careers. Described as such, reflection becomes a habit of mind, a way of being with teaching that permeates all aspects of the teaching process.

But Dewey's work does not incorporate a critical perspective. Horkheimer and other social theorists in the Frankfurt School introduced critical notions of liberation and emancipation to thinking. Horkheimer (1982) writes that Critical Theory aims "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" in oppressive environments (p. 244). In the context of teaching, critical reflection becomes a transformative process that engages teachers as agents of change. Smyth (1989) refers to this approach as "active and militant," infusing "action with a sense of power and politics" (p. 3). The aim of critical reflection is "not just understanding, but improving the quality of life of disadvantaged groups" (Valli, 1997, p. 78). Here, understanding the nature of social structures and their relation to the dynamics of

power is essential. I turn to contemporary social movements, which have influenced education, to understand these relations.

Giroux's (1992) border pedagogy reveals the role of reflecting on our own experiences in teaching for transformation:

> Knowledge and power come together not to merely reaffirm difference but to also interrogate it, to open up broader theoretical consideration, to tease out its limitations, and to engage a vision of community in which student voices define themselves in terms of their distinct social formations and their broader collective hopes. For critical educators, this entails speaking *to* important social, political, and cultural issues from a deep sense of the politics of their own location and *the necessity to engage and often unlearn the habits of institutional (as well as forms of racial, gender, and class-specific) privilege that buttress their own power while sometimes preventing others from becoming questioning subjects.* (p. 35) (italics added)

Borrowing from post-colonialism and post-modernism Giroux presents border pedagogy as a means to understand and dismantle systems of power that perpetuate societal inequities.

Post-colonialism teaches us to reconsider the use of language in systems of dominance, asking how it is produced and reproduced in ways that perpetuate legacies of imperialism and colonialism. In the classroom, I wonder how the language I use and the language of the curriculum, as well as textbooks, alienate my female students, students of color, and English Language Learners.

Post-modernism asks us to question the grand Eurocentric narratives that present universal truths. Lyotard (1979/1993) writes, "The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation" (p. 510). What are the truths of the individual students in my classroom who represent so many ways of being, so

many perspectives and experiences? How do I encourage their narratives to enter the classroom? How do I make their histories significant, and how do I allow the complexity of culture, of narrative, and of history to reveal itself?

Critical reflection allows teachers to focus on societal inequities, asking how experiences around differences based on race, class, gender, sexuality, language, etc…shape teacher-student and student-student interactions in the classroom. Milner (2003) urges teachers to rethink and reconsider continuously racial consequences in cultural contexts. Teachers must ask the essential question: "…how might my racial experiences (as the teacher) impact my interactions with this student in this context" (p. 177). Milner advocates developing the competencies to think through situations instead of looking for prescriptive responses, since each situation is different.

My vision of critical reflection applies not only to race but to all interactions around race, class, and gender. So I ask, how might my experiences around sexual orientation impact how I view the Tommi Avicollis and the Earl Jacksons of the world in a particular classroom context? How does my reflection enable me to contribute to change and to teach for social justice? Critical reflection as a habit of mind, which encompasses all aspects of teaching and learning, becomes an embodied way of knowing and living in the world.

Why is critical reflection among teachers necessary? Palmer (2007) writes, "When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my own unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well" (p. 3). Ritchie (2000) personalizes Palmer's words through her own experience: "I'm continually led to consider the

possible implications for my students of my identity as a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman, how these factors influence the dynamics of my classroom, my interactions with students, and students' perceptions of my authority" (p. 4). Ritchie and her colleague Wilson (2000) maintain that teachers' personal and professional identities are intertwined. By bringing these identities into dialogue, teachers can begin to develop narratives that counter the prevailing scripted narratives of school culture and personal background.

Critical reflection adds understandings of interactions around race, class, and gender to the process of knowing oneself. As classrooms become increasingly diverse throughout the United States, the likelihood that new teachers will enter classrooms with students of backgrounds that differ from their own also increases. How teachers view and interact with these students may depend on how well they have reflected on notions of race, class, and gender and how well they have unpacked the biases and assumptions they hold of various groups. Harrington et al. (1996) observe that you cannot teach preservice teachers all they need to know. It is, therefore, important to instill a process, to help them create habits of mind that allow them to reflect critically, so they will be able to think about and analyze the dilemmas around difference that they encounter in schools.

Where does critical reflection fit in the life of a teacher? Critical reflection should be part of a greater approach to teaching that infuses principles of social justice throughout the curriculum, as in multicultural education (as multicultural education is theorized, not in the limited ways it is often practiced). In *New Directions in Multicultural Education: Complexities, Boundaries, and Critical Race*

Theory Ladson-Billings (2004) explores a "New Multiculturalism:" critical multiculturalism, which aims to realign multicultural education with its original focus on issues of race and racism. This "New Multiculturalism" is in part a response to the tension within the field around race and racism. Sleeter and Bernal (2004) suggest that multicultural education today does not incorporate issues of race and racism into its analysis: "…a good deal of what occurs within the arena of multicultural education today does not address power relations critically, particularly racism" (p. 240). Similarly, Ladson-Billings argues for "…a reexamination and restoration of race/racism as a part of the multicultural agenda" (p. 248). Sleeter and Bernal discuss critical race theory as a model for transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power through a social justice paradigm aimed at combating racism as part of a larger goal to eliminate all "isms."

Critical race theory attempts to address valid concerns about the absence of conversations on power and privilege from the classroom. Diversity cannot consist solely of celebrations of difference. Without discussions about structural forms of discrimination and dysconscious racism (King, 1991), or acceptance of the status quo, little will change in society. If reflection is to be transformative, then it must include a critical perspective that explores the dynamics of power in society. But how, then, do educators avoid establishing a hierarchy of oppression? Foregrounding race suggests prioritizing race over other forms of difference. Focusing on race and racism to the exclusion of other forms of oppression risks ignoring students' experiences around a range of identities. As a black, lesbian, feminist, Audre Lorde (1996) reminds us of the many faces of oppression:

> …I have learned that oppression and the intolerance of difference
> come in all shapes and sizes and colors and sexualities; and that among
> those of us who share the goals of liberation and a workable future for
> our children there can be no hierarchies of oppression… (p. 51)

Mobley (2000) similarly observes, "We often do not permit the close examination of race and sexual orientation" (p. 174). He further comments that the separation of race and gender results in a denial of those "individuals who identify with more than one of the 'selected,' protected categories of culture" (p. 174).

Identity is complex and we must be mindful of this complexity and of the intersectionality of race, class, and gender (Grant, Elsbree & Fondrie, 2004). It is difficult to focus on any one aspect of individual identity, as the societal factors that lead to oppression of one identity also contribute to the oppression of other identities: "…sexism…and heterosexism…both arise from the same source as racism—a belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby its right to dominance" (Lorde, 1996, p. 51).

With an understanding of the content of critical reflection, consideration must be given to its deeper purpose. How does critical reflection benefit teachers and students, and contribute to equitable schooling? Is it realistic to think that reflection will prevent dreams from being deferred?

Critical Reflection as Capacity Building: Developing Agents of Change

Teaching for diversity[2] "is conceived not as enabling teachers to learn *about* exotic and diverse 'others,' but rather in terms of teaching that is democratic,

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[2] The research on teaching for diversity uses a variety of terms, including anti-racist education, anti-bias education, cultural diversity, social justice education and multicultural education. Though there are distinctions between these terms, in general they capture what is referred to in this work as teaching for diversity: an effort to educate teachers about their own and others' biases, as well as the social structures that maintain power differentials, and an attempt to develop the knowledge and dispositions

multicultural, and consistent with social justice values and purposes" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, xvi). As such, teachers must be prepared to think and act in socially just ways. This requires envisioning teachers as agents of change. What does it mean to be an agent of change?

Students of color face enormous barriers to educational opportunity, resulting in an achievement gap with them on one side and white students on the other (Darling-Hammond, 2004). If reducing the achievement gap is an educational goal, which seems to be the intention of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), then systems of education can no longer avoid working for equity.

Education for equity is an inherently political process. Surprisingly though, the notion of the teacher as an agent of change, or teaching for social justice, is completely counter to current directions in education, which Apple (2006) calls "conservative modernization" (p. 31). Among the groups supporting this rightward turn in education, as evidenced by NCLB policies, are neoconservatives. Neoconservatives advocate a return to the past in which "morality reigned" and people "knew their place" (Apple, 2006). The neoconservative agenda supports mandatory national and statewide curricula and testing, and a revival of the "Western tradition" which advocates unity over multiculturalism. According to Apple, "We/they binary oppositions dominate this discourse and the culture of the "Other" is to be feared" (p. 183). Apple's discussion of the neoconservative agenda, much of which is embraced in NCLB, illustrates the extent to which schools continue to

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to combat these biases within themselves, their school, and their community for the purposes of creating an equitable, safe learning environment. I use several of the terms mentioned above to refer to teaching for diversity.

perpetuate societal inequities. How can teachers challenge the prevailing discourse?

Can micro-level changes in the classroom make a difference?

Hadden (2000) discusses the disconnect between the charter to educate, voiced in academia, and the mandate to train, expressed in schools. Some teacher preparation programs advocate critical pedagogy, as well as the notion of the teacher as an agent of change, while schools require traditional methods of teaching and adherence to state curricula. Hadden's decision to leave her job as a public school teacher because of the mandate to train illustrates the very real struggles encountered by those who teach for change. Here I return to the question I posed in Chapter One: Can teachers close the achievement gap without working to address the greater social and political contexts that have created such a gap? Critical reflection focuses on the role of the teacher in contributing to equity in the classroom. What good does it do to create equity in such a small space when students inevitably leave that space and enter spaces where they will be *othered,* where oppression is the norm? School and society are inextricably linked.

While contemporary educators and theorists, including Freire and Giroux, espouse the notion of education as a political act, the idea of the school as a site to enact social reform and political activism is not new. In 1932 George Counts wrote of the educator as social transformer: "Education as a force for social regeneration must march hand in hand with the living and creative forces of the social order. In their own lives teachers must bridge the gap between school and society and play some part in the fashioning of those great common purposes which should bind the two

together" (1932, p. 31). The struggle to connect school and society continues more than three-quarters of a century later.

Some authors demand a macro level focus, looking at society, instead of the micro level of the classroom. Rothstein (2004) focuses primarily on class and schooling. In order for the educational system to narrow the black-white/low-to middle-income achievement gap, society must seek macro level reforms. Such reforms require restructuring and transforming social and labor policy as well as school reform. Without addressing the inequalities in society, the problem of unequal education in the United States will not be solved.

Rothstein raises significant issues at the societal level. How can we expect our students to benefit from schooling when their asthma leaves them at home resting, or when their toothache leaves them in the nurse's office because they do not have dental insurance? Teachers alone certainly cannot address these issues. We must educate our teachers to instill in our students an understanding of the macro level issues, so they can work to address them. We cannot separate the macro from the micro. Schools are yet another social institution reflecting inequities based on difference. The inequity in schools reflects inequity in society. An attempt to fix the micro without addressing the macro simply will not work. How, then, can teachers address societal issues in ways students can understand?

Ted Aoki (2005a) confirms that education is not a neutral act: "…there exist possibilities for empowerment that can nourish transformation of the self and the curriculum reality" (p. 121). He continues:

> Reflection, however, is not only oriented toward making conscious the
> unconscious by disclosing underlying assumptions and intentions, but

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it is also oriented toward the implications for action guided by the newly gained critical knowing. It is interested in bringing about a reorientation through clarification of the assumptions and intentions upon which thought and action rest…. Implementation of Curriculum X as situational praxis has an interest in liberation of the teacher from hidden assumptions and intentions, promoting a social theory grounded in the moral attitude of liberation and fulfillment. (p. 123)

Reflection can, therefore, develop a teacher's capacity to be an agent of change.

The notion of teachers as agents of change raises key questions about teacher actions inside and outside of the classroom. What is the domain for teacher activism? How does a teacher respond to resistance to a social justice agenda among students? And how does a teacher avoid becoming intolerant of intolerance? Is it possible to embrace a social justice agenda and allow students to find their own voice, regardless of how unaccepting that voice may be? How does a teacher reconcile these notions? How can critical reflection help a teacher manage these challenges in the classroom? These questions guide my thinking as I slowly move forward in my understanding of *othering* and what *othering* means for the classroom.

The Challenge Ahead

The Academy Award winning picture *Crash* (Haggis, 2006) reminds us of our capacity to do that of which we think we are not capable—to *other* someone though this may be contrary in every way to how we imagine ourselves to be. When a racist cop's partner asks to be reassigned, the racist individual warns him:

Wait 'till you've been on the job a few more years.
Wait 'till you've been doin' it a little longer.
You think you know who you are. You have no idea.

Crash presents a series of incidents involving prejudice and discrimination, illustrating just how true the above statements can be. The film reminds us of the

harsh reality that bias is a part of our daily lives. Despite this reality, why is it so hard for us to think about the pain we cause *others*? Why do we hesitate as a society to discuss prejudice and discrimination openly and often deny that these phenomena exist in present day. "Those are things my parents dealt with," is frequently a response I hear from students. How does society come to suppress negative connotations of difference, which we become aware of as early as pre-school?

In the chapters that follow, I share additional conversations with teachers, delving deeper into the mechanism of *othering*. While my preliminary conversations with Judy and Jaime focused exclusively on their personal experiences as *other* and *otherer*, I open the conversation further with the five participants in my research to consider how *othering* occurs in the classroom and what this means for their interactions with students. But, first, in Chapter Three, I turn to the philosophical underpinnings of my research, exploring how philosophers encounter the *other* in ways that speak to my social justice orientation, in ways that dismantle the us/them dichotomy that maintains the *other* as outsider.

CHAPTER THREE: PHILOSOPHICAL AND

METHODOLOGICAL GROUNDING

First human science is concerned with action in that hermeneutic
phenomenological reflection deepens thought and therefore radicalizes
thinking and the acting that flows from it….It is on the basis of
understanding what serves the human good of this child, or these children
in need, that one may engage in *collective* political action….Or perhaps
more down to earth: one may engage in *personal* action which will help
specific children in predicaments…(van Manen, 1997, p. 154)

Max van Manen presents phenomenology as a human science with a

pedadogical concern and critical orientation. As I consider what it means for teachers

to be both *other* and be *otherer,* and to understand the influence of their *othering* on

their interactions with students, I reflect on what it means to teach for social

transformation. In Chapter One I write about critical pedagogy and social

reconstructionism as ways for teachers to engage students in questioning power

dynamics in society and to enable teachers to create their own change. In order to

create equitable classrooms, we must transform how we understand what it means to

live and act in the world with *others*. We must challenge individual, institutional, and

structural forms of discrimination that maintain systems of privilege. Phenomenology

as a "critical philosophy of action" (van Manen, 1997, p. 154) allows me to open up

what it means to *other* in ways that forefront the needs of the child in my search for

human good.

Van Manen (1997) contrasts human science and social science:

We note that traditional behavioral research leads to instrumental
knowledge principles: useful techniques, managerial policies, and rules-
for-acting. In contrast, phenomenological research gives us tactful
thoughtfulness: situational perceptiveness, discernment, and depthful
understanding. The fundamental thesis is that pedagogic thoughtfulness
and tact are essential elements of pedagogic competence. (p. 156)

In developing my critical, pedagogic competence, I focus on the "concrete, pedagogic situations and relations" (van Manen, p. 157) of my participants, looking for moments of tact and thoughtfulness that unfold what it means to teach for the good of the child.

In this chapter I attend to the methodology of phenomenology, clarifying its relevance for my research, and explaining how I will engage with a methodology that does not have a proscribed process. I also explore the specific philosophers who speak to my work and contribute to my meaning-making process by expanding my understanding of the *other*.

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Why Phenomenology?
Elements of a Human Science that Resonate for an Anti-Bias Educator

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Hermeneutic phenomenology is an interpretive research approach to human science. Phenomenology allows for a deeper understanding of what it means to be human and to act humanly in educational settings (van Manen, 1997), as a way of understanding what it means to *be* in the world. The act of researching, of questioning, is an effort to become more a part of the world: "In doing research we question the world's very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world, and which bring the world as world into being for us and in us" (van Manen, p. 5). By unpacking how it is that *othering* happens and by examining the consequences of *othering* on teachers' interactions with their students, I attempt to make sense of teachers' relations in the world of their classroom.

The phenomenological process for the researcher begins by writing about one's own life experiences and pre-understandings of the phenomenon (Gadamer, 1975/2004). It is through our pre-understandings that we begin the meaning-making process. Similar to anti-bias education, we must "dislodge and confront our

unexamined assumptions" (van Manen, 1997, p. xii). This process resonates for me as an anti-bias educator. My work demands constant reflection and compels me to seek a deeper meaning in my research that begins with myself.

Jardine, Clifford, and Friesen (2003) write:

The god Hermes, from which hermeneutics gets its name, was a go-between figure, working borders and boundaries and opening up what seemed previously closed, stirring up what seemed previously settled, questioning what seemed obvious, stealing away with what seemed secure. (Jardine et al., pp. 38-39)

Through my research I aim to trouble the thinking of educators who believe they know who their students are, or what their students need, without *knowing* their students. Ellsworth (1997) speaks of this process in terms of the power of address. Mode of address, she observes, "…is one of those intimate relations of social and cultural power that shapes and misshapes who teachers think students are, and who students come to think themselves to be" (p. 6). Ellsworth "troubles dialogue" in the classroom, making "use of the unpredictable and uncontrollable interaction between the teacher's and the student's unconscious resistances to knowledge and passions for ignore-ance" (p. 16). And so I question the power/knowledge teachers claim to have, and seek to exert, over their students and their curriculum. I look for the spaces in-between, the places where we may not find traditional learning but where teachers' and students' knowing takes off.

I want to problematize how we live in a world that privileges some groups over *others* and allows such privileging to influence how our children are educated. I endeavor to disrupt the teaching of those who reflect on what happens in the classroom without reflecting on what they bring to the classroom. I want my research

to open up borders that keep us from seeing our students as they wish to be seen. Hermeneutic phenomenology offers me a path to uncovering a personal understanding of *othering*, an evolving understanding that takes shape as I write my way to meaning.

Phenomenology tries to elucidate the meaning in our actions. "We know things through our bodies, through our relations with *others*, and through interaction with the things of our world" (van Manen, 1997, p. xiv). Through a human science approach, my research will explore the meaning in teachers' actions around prejudice and discrimination. What does their bodily interaction with the *other* suggest?

Van Manen (1997) creates a natural connection between phenomenology and pedagogy:

> Pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience (children's realities and lifeworlds). Pedagogy requires a hermeneutic ability to make interpretive sense of the phenomena of the lifeworld in order to see the pedagogic significance of situations and relations of living with children. (p. 2)

As I stated earlier, I cannot separate my concern for the *other* from the field of education. They are intertwined, and, as such, my research on *othering* must be viewed within the context of education, always remaining mindful of the influence of *othering* on the lives of children and on their experiences in pedagogic situations. Nor can I separate my concern for the *other* from critical reflection that engages us in our own experiences. In *The Tact of Teaching*, van Manen (1991) reminds us of the role of experience in education: "Experience can open up understanding that restores a sense of embodied knowing" (p. 9). Our felt experiences around *othering* can help us to understand the *other*. Van Manen also asserts that pedagogical action always has

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an ethical-moral dimension, for educators continually are trying to distinguish between what is good and what is not good for a child. But how can a teacher know what is good for a child when he or she sees that child through a lens that is blurred by individual and systemic bias? Critical reflection must become a constant practice, a way of being in the world that allows teachers to engage with the *other* in the classroom for the good of the child.

Martin Buber (1967) writes that in order for the teacher to see all of a student's potential,

> the teacher must really *mean* him as the definite person he is in his potential and in his actuality…he must be aware of him as a whole being and affirm him in the wholeness. But he can only do this if he meets him again and again as his partner in a bipolar situation…he must practice the kind of realization I call inclusion… (pp. 51-52)

Buber talks here of an authentic understanding of the student through an ongoing, active relationship. Authentic relationships are not passive. Buber captures the complexity of knowing students in a time sensitive setting. Authentic knowing is the task of the teacher's *being* in the classroom, not the task of a particular day or week.

How does a child *feel* when part of an authentic relationship with the teacher, when placed at the center of pedagogical concern? As van Manen (1991) notes, the most important pedagogical question is: "How does the child experience this particular situation, relationship, or event?" (p. 11). If we accept the notion that the child's perspective in the classroom is foremost, then we must concern ourselves with how children interpret what we say and do.

As I enter the phenomenological domain, considering the ways in which a human science approach will allow me to re-think what it means to *other*, I must be

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mindful of phenomenology's philosophical underpinnings. In what ways do philosophers of phenomenology speak about engaging with the *other*? How do their words send me forward on my social justice way?

Philosophical Understandings of the *Other*

To ground my research, as phenomenology demands, I have turned to philosophers, in particular those who emphasize social justice principles. Emmanuel Levinas (1969, 1989, 1990) and Jacques Derrida (1982, 1996) speak to my desire to understand *othering* by emphasizing morality, ethics, and responsibility. The following section explores the writing of these philosophers as they relate to my phenomenon. My research also draws on the writings of Elie Wiesel (1960) as well as the educational philosopher Maxine Greene (1986). I draw on these authors and others throughout this work. But first it is necessary for me to address a particular absence from my philosophical grounding. Heidegger is attributed as a fundamental thinker in phenomenology. I, therefore, must explain why he does not appear throughout my research and how I have been able to use the works of other philosophers whose writings, while diverging from Heidegger's, may be rooted in his thoughts.

Heidegger: A Man and His Work?

As a Ph.D. student who has selected phenomenology as the methodology for my dissertation research, I am faced with the question of whether or not to include Heidegger's work among the philosophers who ground my research. I choose not to. Heidegger's involvement with the National Socialist Movement and his membership in the Nazi party, as well as his active participation in discrimination against Jews,

raises questions for me about the nature of his philosophy. But I cannot simply omit Heidegger from my writing. I must provide an explanation for the absence of his philosophy, and I must clarify that this choice directly relates to the research in which I am engaged. I cannot allow readers to conclude that by omission I have determined that Heidegger's philosophy does not match my research interests and therefore does not provide a good foundation. Readers must understand that the omission of Heidegger's philosophy is a statement of my belief that Heidegger was anti-Semitic and that both he *and* his work are antithetical to my research.

Heidegger the man, and therefore his work, raise complex questions: What is anti-Semitism? What does it mean to be anti-Semitic? Does engaging with the works of an anti-Semite lend credibility to his or her anti-Semitic views? In the introduction to *Being Jewish/Reading Heidegger: An Ontological Encounter* (2004), Scult presents being Jewish as "a way of life, grounded in an intense interpretive relationship to a sacred text, namely, the Torah" (p. xv). Heidegger is thus read and understood through the lens of Jewish hermeneutics, based on the Torah as sacred text.

I present an alternative view of being Jewish, not as something based on a religion but based on an ethnicity, based on a sense of belonging to a group of people that for centuries has endured persecution and efforts to promote our extinction. How do I *feel* Jewish? My sense of being Jewish is a bodily knowing. It is something in my core that shapes how I live in, experience, and interpret the world. This lens provides a much more visceral, but no less significant, reading of Heidegger.

Many Jews, as well as non-Jews, disregard being Jewish as an ethnicity. And that is fine—for them. I do not claim to be able to define anyone but myself. How did my Jewish identity develop? I was raised in a secular home. As a child I knew that my parents were Jewish and that I was Jewish, but I did not have a strong sense of what this meant. We did not belong to a synagogue, we did not celebrate or acknowledge Jewish traditions or holidays, and we did not talk much about the Holocaust. As a child I did not have Jewish friends and did not talk to my friends about being Jewish, as there was little to say. My ethnicity was not a secret, but at the same time, it was not something I could say much about.

As a teen my identity became more confusing. My mother made it clear that anti-Semitism existed, but I never experienced it overtly. She would recall her experiences with anti-Semitism as a child in the United States during World War II. While I did not know how to express what being Jewish meant, I was clear that it meant being different. And this difference led to a sense of belonging to a group of people precisely because of my background.

In my twenties I began to understand what it meant to be Jewish and to *feel* more Jewish. As I grew into my body, I grew into my self and my sense of being Jewish. I learned that my grandmother's family had been killed in the Holocaust and I experienced what it was like to feel the need to keep my Jewish identity a secret. I traveled to Auschwitz, and I spoke with Holocaust survivors living in Slovakia while serving there for two years with the Peace Corps. And then I worked for the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish civil rights organization, where I began to understand the many ways in which anti-Semitism can reveal itself. There is no reading of the

Torah or studying of the Talmud in my background, but there is an undeniable feeling

of being Jewish and of connection to a group of people with a similar heritage.

This background is my tradition, though not in the sense of tradition as

custom. Gadamer (1975/2004) writes, "…tradition has a justification that lies beyond

rational grounding and in large measure determines our institutions and attitudes" (p.

282). My history forms my preunderstandings and shapes how I read Heidegger.

How can I use these pre-understandings as a way to engage with Heidegger, one

might ask. The answer is I cannot. My tradition is filled with emotion and vigilance.

It is a history in which much suffering has occurred, and to allow Heidegger to be a

part of my present, which becomes my history, is unfathomable. It is a history steeped

in pain—pain so intense that it is physical. But is emotion, which feeds my bodily

knowing, enough to prevent me from searching for value in Heidegger's work?

Scult (2004) writes:

I am a Jew who reads Heidegger. Nothing remarkable in that. There
are many who do. Of course the relationship does require a bit of
maintenance work around the edges in order to preserve an appropriate
emotional distance from the man as he lived, while at the same time
permitting the most intense intellectual and spiritual intimacy with the
man as he thought and wrote. In certain moods, the difficulty and
delicacy of this maneuver loom large; and Heidegger's active and
passive complicity in the horrendous adventure of National Socialism
threatens to prohibit a seriously focused philosophical reading of his
work. This book is not written in one of those moods. (p. 1)

According to Scult I must set emotion aside in order to have an "intellectual and

spiritual intimacy" with Heidegger the philosopher. Again, I turn to Gadamer

(1975/2004), a Heidegger supporter, for guidance: "Tradition is still viewed as the

abstract opposite of free self-determination, since its validity does not require any

reasons but conditions us without our questioning it" (p. 282). I cannot deny my

history, my tradition, in reading Heidegger. I cannot separate my emotion from my reason, just as I cannot separate Heidegger the man from his work. To accept Heidegger (man and work as one) is to enter a realm of self-hatred as a Jew, a place where I could make excuses for Heidegger's actions and pretend his actions were insignificant for the Jewish people. To accept him might also mean to forgive him. But is it my place to forgive him? Can I forgive Heidegger's complicity on behalf of my Lithuanian relatives who were forced by Nazis to march to the edge of their town and then shot dead? As Landa (2007) questions, "Who gives anyone the authority to speak for the murdered?" (p. 120).

I have listened to portions of dissertations in which Ph.D. students have struggled to come to terms with Heidegger the man in order to appreciate Heidegger the philosopher. I do not share in this struggle. To paraphrase Rumi (2001), I must speak the clearest truth I know, and I am thus called upon to denounce Heidegger's actions and to clarify how his actions tarnish his work, for they are indistinguishable.

What is anti-Semitism? According to the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish civil rights organization, anti-Semitism is prejudice and/or discrimination against Jews (ADL website): "Anti-Semitism can be based on hatred against Jews because of their religious beliefs, their group membership (ethnicity) and sometimes on the *erroneous* belief that Jews are a race. Jews are, in fact, of all different races." While the term is not etymologically restricted to anti-Jewish theories, actions, and policies, it is almost always used as such. The term anti-Semitism was first used in Germany in 1880 by Wilhelm Marr and is derived from anti and Semite. "Semite" from *Semita*, which is from Shem, one of the three sons of Noah (Gen. x:21-30), regarded as the

ancestor of the Semites, first appeared in 1847 in reference to "Jew, Arab, Assyrian, Aramæan." In recent use it relates to the specific sense "Jewish," but it is not historically so limited. The prefix "anti" is from Greek meaning "against, opposite, instead of."

If anti-Semitism refers to both prejudice and discrimination against Jews, then it must include a range of thoughts and actions. One need not have killed a Jew to be considered an anti-Semite. "Isms" like racism and anti-Semitism are often thought of as referring to extreme acts of hate, but in fact, racism and anti-Semitism embody much more seemingly benign actions that first appear as verbalized thoughts which, when left unchecked by a society, can escalate to tragic violence.

Let us take as a popular example the statements made by actor Mel Gibson. When stopped by police in Los Angeles, CA for drunk driving, he allegedly made several remarks that the media labeled anti-Semitic: "The Jews are responsible for all of the wars in the world" (Marquez, 2006). Many in Hollywood came to Gibson's defense saying they know him well and he is not an anti-Semite. Producer Dean Devlin, who is Jewish and considers Gibson to be one of his closest friends in Hollywood said: "If Mel is an anti-Semite, then he spends a lot of time with us, which makes no sense'' (BBC website). When asked if Gibson is an anti-Semite, actress Jodie Foster commented, "Absolutely not" (BBC website). Film executive Tom Sherak's remarks shed some light on the situation: "I know Mel. I've not heard him say [anything anti-Semitic]. Those things in his head—which we all find very offensive, especially those of use who are Jewish—I don't see portrayed when I'm around him" (Adato et al., 2006). Sherak raises the notion that there are ideas in Mel

Gibson's head with which people might not be familiar. Can Foster know for certain that Mel Gibson is not an anti-Semite? Can she know the innermost thoughts which form his attitudes?

Gibson's behavior raises the following question: Can one espouse prejudices about a group and still engage with that group? When this behavior occurs, it is what I call the "exception to the rule" phenomenon. Sartre (1948) elaborates on this concept:

> The sadistic attraction that the anti-Semite feels toward the Jew is so strong that it is not unusual to see one of these sworn enemies of Israel surround himself with Jewish friends. To be sure, he says they are "exceptional Jews," insists that "these aren't like the rest."…Such protestations of friendship are not sincere, for anti-Semites do not envisage, even in their statements, sparing the "good Jews"…(pp. 47-48)

As someone who is not connected with the external associations one has of being Jewish, e.g. celebrating holidays and belonging to a place of worship, I have been told numerous times by acquaintances, "You don't seem Jewish" when they find out that I am. What does this mean? What kind of prejudices are these acquaintances holding at bay when they allow themselves to engage with someone who does not fit the stereotypes they espouse about what it means to be Jewish? In perceiving me as not Jewish and learning that I am, despite their preconceived notions, I have proven to be the exception to the rule, the one who is not like other Jews who actually meet the stereotype in their minds. I maintain, therefore, that it is possible, in the case of Mel Gibson, to be anti-Semitic, to make anti-Semitic statements, and at the same time to have friends who are Jewish. Turning to Heidegger, the fact he had a Jewish lover, Jewish students, and Jewish friends does not negate his anti-Semitism.

What does it mean to be anti-Semitic? Are negative thoughts about Jews dangerous? The Anti-Defamation League presents the Pyramid of Hate (Figure 1) as a way to explain how bias can escalate. Acts of bias at the bottom of the pyramid, such as stereotypes, jokes and rumors, when left unchallenged by individuals and society, can lead to acts of prejudice, which include ridicule, scapegoating, and social avoidance. Acts of prejudice when left unchallenged can lead to acts of discrimination, which include housing and employment discrimination and social exclusion. Such acts can escalate to violence when left unchecked. Genocide can result when violence occurs on a wide scale and is accepted by society.

Figure 1. Pyramid of Hate
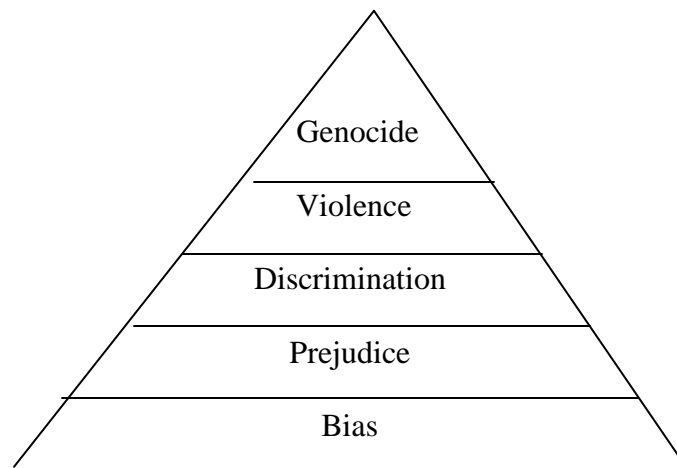
The pyramid illustrates how acts of discrimination do not occur without a foundation. They begin as seemingly benign acts of bias which are based on the messages we receive from society, from parents, peers, religious leaders, the media, etc… But are acts of bias ever benign? Acts of bias include stereotypes, which may appear to be positive, such as the notion of Asian students as the "model minority." But can

stereotypes ever be positive? Even stereotypes that may be perceived as positive have

negative consequences for the group being stereotyped. What happens to the "model

minority" student who is not so good at math? What expectations are placed on this

student, and how does this student feel when he or she does not live up to them? In

what ways do teachers participate in the pyramid of hate? And what do they need to

change in their lives in order to prevent their own escalation up the pyramid?

If we apply the pyramid concept to Heidegger, it becomes evident that

Heidegger's actions, which included the exclusion of Jews from the university, did

not occur spontaneously. They were supported by possible preexisting prejudices

against Jews. Sartre (1948) illuminates how anti-Semitism comes to be accepted in

society:

> …we look upon persons and characters as mosaics in which each stone
> coexists with the others without that coexistence affecting the nature of
> the whole. Thus an anti-Semitic opinion appears to us to be a molecule
> that can enter into combination with other molecules of any origin
> whatsoever without undergoing any alteration. A man may be a good
> father and a good husband, a conscientious citizen, highly cultivated,
> philanthropic *and* in addition an anti-Semite. He may like fishing and
> the pleasures of love, may be tolerant in matters of religion, full of
> generous notions about the condition of the natives in Central Africa,
> *and* in addition detest the Jews. (p. 8)

Sartre doubts whether one person can be at the same time good and evil: "A man who

finds it entirely natural to denounce other men cannot have our conception of

humanity; he does not see even those whom he aids in the same light as we do. His

generosity, his kindness are not like our kindness, our generosity…" (p. 21). Sartre's

interpretation creates a binary categorization. One is either good or evil. Even a

smattering of hate is destructive to both the individual and to the object of that hate.

Was Heidegger an anti-Semite? Safranski (1998), who acknowledges

Heidegger's "increasingly patent anti-Semitism, including toward his group of

enthusiastic Jewish pupils and faculty colleagues" (p. 254), details Heidegger's

actions and statements which I view as anti-Semitic. Elzbieta Ettinger writes of

Heidegger's response to Hannah Arendt's inquiry in 1933 into his treatment of Jews.

Ettinger (1995) paraphrases his angered reply to Arendt:

> One by one he listed the favors he accorded Jews—his accessibility to
> Jewish students, to whom he generously gave of his time, disruptive
> though it was to his own work, getting them stipends and discussing
> their dissertations with them. Who comes to him in an emergency? A
> Jew. Who insists on urgently discussing his doctoral degree? A Jew.
> Who sends him voluminous work for urgent critique? A Jew. Who
> asks him for help in obtaining grants? Jews. (pp. 35-36)

Heidegger's evident frustration with the requests of his Jewish students

reveals that he finds them inappropriately demanding. Ettinger concludes that

Heidegger did in fact distinguish between Germans and German Jews. And despite

his denials, once he became rector, he ended contact with his Jewish colleagues and

stopped graduating his Jewish students, preferring instead to pass them on to his

colleagues. Clearly Heidegger viewed the Jewish students and colleagues as *other*.

But were Heidegger's actions a reaction to Nazism, or were they the result of a

philosophy that valued nationhood over all else? Safranski (1998) comments that

Heidegger was not an anti-Semite in the sense of the "ideological lunacy of Nazism"

(p. 254). But is it only at this level of extremism that one's thoughts when translated

to action become destructive?

Even prior to 1933 Heidegger expressed anti-Semitism. In a letter dated

October 20, 1929 to Victor Schworer of the Hardship Committee for German

Science, a scholarship granting organization, Heidegger writes: "There is a pressing need for us to remember that we are faced with the choice of either bringing genuine autochthonous forces and educators into our German spiritual life, or finally abandoning it to the growing Judaization in the wider and narrower sense" (*Die Zeit*, December 22, 1989, as cited in Safranski, 1998, p. 255).

It is not difficult to argue that Heidegger is anti-Semitic. His words make the case against him. But what does this mean for his work? Can we separate a man from his work? To what extent is Heidegger's philosophy imbued with Nazi sentiment? Safranski notes that in 1932, Nazism was not yet reflected in his philosophy but that this would soon change:

> As yet his political sympathies for Nazism were not reflected in his philosophy, but a year later this would change fundamentally. Then the great moment of history would have arrived for Heidegger, that "overturning of the entire human Being" of which he had spoken in his Plato lectures. The National Socialist revolution would become for him a *Dasein*-controlling event, one that would penetrate his philosophy to its core, forcing the philosopher beyond the "boundaries of philosophy." (Safranski, 1998, p. 227)

Safranski describes how the content of Heidegger's philosophy and the content of his life, and his actions as a member of the Nazi party, become indistinguishable, one influencing the other. According to Safranski, Heidegger's actions during this period were instructed and guided by his own philosophizing. Heidegger the man and Heidegger the philosopher had become one.

Farias (1989) and Landa (2007) argue differently, however. They have examined Heidegger's philosophy and found it rooted in anti-Semitism. Farias posits that Heidegger's participation in the Nazi party was the outgrowth of his learnings from childhood onward: "Heidegger's decision to join the NSDAP was in no way the

result of unexpected opportunism or tactical considerations. The decision was clearly linked with his having already acted in a way consonant with National Socialism prior to becoming rector of the University of Freiburg…" (p. 4).

As a young man, Heidegger was drawn to the teachings of the Augustinian monk Abraham a Sancta Clara, whose writings included, "The Jew is the mortal enemy of all that is Christian" and "Other than Satan, the worst enemy of mankind are the Jews…" (as cited in Farias, 1989, p. 26). Heidegger was well versed in anti-Semitic thought long before he joined the Nazi party. Was joining the movement the ultimate means for him to demonstrate his loyalty to the Fatherland and his hatred of Jews?

Given that all individuals have prejudices, should Heidegger be viewed any differently than his colleagues? Is Heidegger any different than Gadamer, for example, who according to Moran (2000) "compromised with the regime" (p. 263) and whose career benefited from the Nazi presence? Gadamer's "acquiescence, or, more properly, lack of threat to the Nazi regime" (Moran, p. 263) is distinct from Heidegger's enthusiastic support for the Nazi party. Surprised by Hitler's rise to power, Gadamer assumed Hitler "would divest himself of his non-sensical rhetoric when in power, especially his anti-Semitism" (Moran, p. 262). Gadamer chose to remain apolitical in his work at the university during the war, though even remaining apolitical at the time was a strong choice. Heidegger, in contrast, used membership in the Nazi party to advance his philosophical and career goals. In regard to his civic inaction during World War II, Gadamer (1989) writes, "It can happen today that one is asked: why did you people not cry out? There is a tendency, above all, to

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underestimate the universally human inclination to conformism, which continually finds new ways and means of self-deception" (p. 427). Gadamer himself distinguishes between his role and that of Heidegger during the war:

> In any case: no surprise should be expected from those of us who, for fifty years, have reflected on what dismayed us in those days and separated us from Heidegger for many years: no surprise when we hear that in 1933—and for years previous, and for how long after?—he "believed" in Hitler. (p. 428)

Safranski (1998) interprets Gadamer's actions during World War II as a survival mechanism, while Heidegger's engagement with Nazism was proactive. This is not to say, however, that Gadamer's acquiescence is acceptable. He clearly participated in the Holocaust but not in the same manner or to the degree that Heidegger did. In terms of his reaction to the "Jewish question" during the Holocaust, Gadamer (2003) writes, "If I were simply to begin recounting right now how I managed to become a full professor without ever joining the party, I could put it quite succinctly—I read Machiavelli. Machiavelli says, 'The enemies of my enemy are my close friends'" (p. 107). Heidegger joined the party. He made the choice to align himself with evil. While this choice was opportunistic, I argue that it was also a result of Heidegger's deep-rooted anti-Semitism.

And what of other philosophers whose lives do not reflect their philosophy? I am not convinced that it is possible for individuals to practice entirely what they preach. But this is not my primary concern with regard to Heidegger. I do not want to hold Heidegger to a higher standard of being simply because he is a philosopher. I would not expect Heidegger's philosophy to provide a road map of his life. The question is not "Did Heidegger live according to his philosophy?" It is possible to

write ideas that are quite distinct from the way in which one lives. The question I ask is "From where does his philosophy emanate?" An individual's philosophy emanates from his or her thoughts and, in the case of phenomenology, from lived experience. Can we separate the thoughts in our head from the feelings in our heart where our beliefs reside? And what role does our experience play in shaping the thoughts that form our work? If Heidegger is anti-Semitic, is his philosophy not then inherently anti-Semitic? This is not to say that his philosophy directly addressed the "Jewish question" in Germany prior to the rise of the Nazi Party, but his increasing focus on German nationhood in essence called for the exclusion of those that did not "fit" the model. The creation of a "with us or against us/one of us or not one of us" mentality excused horrendous acts of violence in favor of the good of the nation. Such a binary categorization is exactly what my research challenges. How can teachers get beyond the us/them dichotomy that results from *othering* students? Heidegger's biography reveals a reverence for an Augustinian monk who espoused anti-Semitic beliefs as well as Heidegger's "discriminatory attitude regarding the intellectual superiority of the Germans…" (Farias, 1989, p. 7). What do the biographies of teachers reveal? How can looking to our past help us unpeel the many layers that form our deep-seated biases, biases that shape how we view and interact with our students?

Heidegger's actions, coupled with his anti-Semitism, create a position that cannot be explained away by circumstance. It is impossible for me to understand Heidegger as anything other than an "active" anti-Semite during World War II, one who made conscious choices for his own benefit that contributed to the attempted

destruction of an entire people. And it is, thus, equally impossible for me to include his philosophy as grounding for my work.

These claims alone are not enough, however. I must determine those principles which I hold dear and consider the extent to which my philosophy of education reflects them. I must ask myself regularly how my approach to learning reflects my passion for combating prejudice and discrimination. This is not to say that I aim to live a life devoid of contradiction or hypocrisy. This is unrealistic, for we are all human. But if there is a lesson to learn from Heidegger's philosophy and his actions during World War II, it is that one's passion loses meaning when one compromises the essence of what it means to be human.

Levinas: A Re-envisioning of the Other

Two Jewish philosophers, Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida have spoken of and written about the impact of anti-Semitism on their worldview, and in the case of Levinas, on his work. Their backgrounds and the nature of their philosophies further highlight the connection between a person and his or her work. I first address Levinas' philosophy as it contributes to my understanding of what it means to *other,* and then I turn to Derrida.

Levinas (1989a), a Holocaust survivor, who was at one time a Heidegger enthusiast, questions Heidegger's nature, given his silence on the Holocaust: "But doesn't this silence…on the gas chambers and death camps lie beyond the realm of feeble excuses and reveal a soul completely cut off from any sensitivity, in which can be perceived a kind of consent to the horror?" (p. 487). Regarding Heidegger's role in the National Socialist Party in connection with his pivotal work *Being and Time*,

Levinas asks, "Can we be assured, however, that there was never any echo of Evil in it?" (p. 488). Heidegger's life and work were counter to Levinas' emphasis on the suffering of the *other* and the need to engage with the *other*.

Levinas was born in Kaunas, Lithuania. During the First World War his family moved to the Ukraine. In 1923 Levinas went to France to study, and although he returned to Lithuania for summers, he lived in France. During World War II he served in the French army and was a prisoner of war in a German camp for officers from 1940 on. As a Jew he was required to do forced labor. Both parents, his brothers and many relatives were killed during the Holocaust.

Given Levinas' experience and tradition, it is not surprising that his philosophy focuses on the face of the *other*. He writes, "Prior to any act, I am concerned with the *other*, and I can never be absolved from this responsibility" (Levinas, 1989b, p. 290). What does Levinas mean by responsibility? Why should I be responsible for someone *other* than myself? Why should my concern extend beyond myself? Levinas articulates a philosophy of ethics that commands our attention as social beings, as people living among *others*.

Levinas' use of the term *other* differs significantly from many interpretations in that the *other* is to be embraced. We have a responsibility to the *other,* but Levinas does not specify what our response should be. He acknowledges that we have a choice in how we treat the *other* and our choices define us: "The relation between the same and the *other*, the welcoming of the *other*, is the ultimate fact, and in it the things figure not as what one builds but as what one gives" (1961/1969, p. 77).

Levinas' philosophy of the *other* seems so grounded in his personal experience that we cannot separate the man from his work. He writes (1963/1990) that his biography is "dominated by the presentiment and the memory of the Nazi horror" (p. 291). Levinas' (1961/1969) philosophy illustrates how our thoughts cannot be separated from our experiences and how our thoughts and experiences form the basis of our work. The horror of war represents a totalitarian mindset in which people seek power and control through system and order. In totality the *other* is seen as someone whom the powerful must control. Being free means being rational, and being rational means giving oneself over to the system that controls, for the group/system is more important than the individual. Totality is an outwardly directed but self-centered way of thinking and being, in which men and things are organized into power systems. Levinas argues that totality has dominated history. He presents infinity as an alternate way of being. In totality people are concerned with the self. In infinity people are concerned with the *other*; people strive for a higher quality of life, for freedom. In infinity, the individual person becomes free, not by belonging to a system, but by fighting against it and by acting on one's own, understanding that we do not have to accept the status quo as right.

In pedagogical terms, infinity resonates in practices that promote teaching for change. In education, totality has dominated. The system has demanded that teachers give themselves over to control by federal policy, by a bureaucracy that tells them what they must teach and how they must teach it. Teaching for social change allows the teacher to question the system that manages what happens in the classroom. It enables teachers to challenge the status quo and to change future history by altering

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how they engage with students in the present. In infinity a teacher comes into a relationship with the student as *other* because of the moral consciousness that the teacher allows her or himself to feel, and respond. In infinity teachers respond to students because they *desire* to, not because they *need* to. The desire to know the *other* must precede engagement, for without this, the engagement becomes one of standard protocol, a way to know the *other* for the sake of the system, instead of knowing the *other* because we heed the call of our conscience.

For Levinas, the relationship between the same and the *other* is formed through language. "We are the same and the other," he writes, but the *and* is not one of addition or of power-over. "A relation whose terms do not form a totality can hence be produced within the general economy of being only as proceeding from the I to the other, as a *face to face,* as delineating a distance in depth—that of conversation, of goodness, of Desire…" (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 39). Conversation maintains an essential distance between the same and the *other*, which prevents totality, or absorbing the *other* into one's own way of being. In leaving my ego behind to engage with the *other*, I acknowledge that the *other* is not an extension of myself. I cannot expect the *other* to act as I do, to live as I do, to want what I want in life. Nor is the *other* completely alien to me. The *other* has a uniqueness, which I must come to understand in its own completeness, without assuming that he or she will fit nicely into the categories I have created for the world.

The *other* does not need me to speak for him or her. How do teachers allow students to speak for themselves? Do we assume that they should be heard through our voice because ours is proper, right? In the introduction to Levinas' *Totality and*

Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority John Wild asks poignantly: "How can I coexist with him [the *other*] and still leave his otherness intact?" (Wild, 1969, p. 13). How can teachers engage in conversation with students who differ from them in authentic ways that not only keep the *otherness* in tact, but allow the *other* to embrace his or her *otherness*, so the Pecolas and Michelles of the world will love their brown eyes instead of wanting blue?

The ethics of Levinas' philosophy is marked by a search for humanity. In giving, in caring, in demonstrating concern for the *other*, Levinas expresses a need to view the *other* as human and as deserving of equal treatment. Levinas' emphasis on the *other* seems in direct response to the evil of the Holocaust. His ethics remind us of our capacity for good and of the importance of seeking humanity in the *other*.

But the human conscience can be tempted by evil. Our survival instincts can betray what we know to be humane. Elie Wiesel's *Night* reminds of the search for humanity even in the direst circumstances. Throughout *Night* Wiesel recounts his experiences in several concentration camps during World War II and how it is that he survived while his family perished. The following quotes demonstrate the change Wiesel (1960) experienced as time passed:

> My father's presence was the only thing that stopped me.…He was running at my side, out of breath, at the end of his strength, at his wit's end. I had no right to let myself die. What would he do without me? I was his only support. (p. 83)

> I gave him [Wiesel's father] what was left of my soup. But it was with a heavy heart. I felt that I was giving it up to him against my will. (p. 102)

> I did not weep [when Wiesel's father died], and it pained me that I could not weep. But I had no more tears. And, in the depths of my being, in the recesses of my weakened conscience, could I have

searched it, I might perhaps have found something like—free at last!
(p. 106)

Over time, the external evil of the Holocaust seeped into Wiesel's core and affected his actions. At what point in our lives does our survival instinct take over, moving us to act in ways previously considered unconscionable? Does the act of *othering* result when we feel our existence is in some way threatened? Sibley (1981) alludes to this in suggesting that when a subordinate group feels threatened by outsiders in society, it joins with the dominant group in targeting the outsider. *Other* becomes *otherer*. But what does existence mean here? In most circumstances we are not talking about the end of a group's existence, as in genocide. We generally are talking about relations of power. Is our survival instinct at play here as well? Have we been taught to seek higher positions of power constantly at the expense of *others*? This notion of power and control over groups is precisely what Levinas rejects in his expression of infinity.

Levinas' philosophy attempts to address the "weakened conscience" to which Wiesel refers. It is the weakened conscience that enables us to do harm to *others*. In Levinas' philosophy we seek "the shelter of conscience" (as cited in Moran, p. 330). Our moral conscience is our strength, that which allows us to view the *other* with open hands and heart. What do we do when our shelter cracks, when our conscience weakens? Do we seek to repair it, or do we welcome the light from outside? How do we maintain our moral compass? Through critical reflection teachers can learn to listen to their moral conscience, but how do they respond when working in a school context that constantly taps at the shelter, forcing the teacher to respond to students in ways that create order and maintain systems of power? Gadamer (1975/2004) writes,

"Self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self, and includes the unity and integrity of the other" (p. 83). Critical reflection allows teachers to gain insight into the self, but for the purpose of creating unity and maintaining the integrity of the *other*. The classroom teacher cannot think or act only in self-interest.

Like Levinas, Greene's (1986) philosophy rejects egocentric views of the world. She discusses the need to be connected to *others*, within the context of teaching. Greene ponders the destructive consequences of being and acting as a narcissist:

> We know that when consciousness splits off too abruptly from the political or the public sphere, the idea of the self is presented as something that can be realized only in private life. At once we realize that the self can never be actualized through solely private experiences, no matter how extraordinary those experiences might be, and surely not the ideal of the teacher's self. Connectedness is required, an overcoming of impassivity, a capacity to notice what lies around us, and a commitment to the constitution of what might be called a common world. (pp. 73-74)

Being with *others* is not a social act; it is a political one. Greene argues that teachers must overcome impassivity; they must engage students in critical thought which will lead to choices that contribute to social transformation. Being connected to *others* is purposeful; it involves releasing the imagination, envisioning a socially just world. Freire (1969/1973) supports this notion when he writes, "To be human is to engage in relationships with others in the world" (p. 3).

Levinas' face of the *other* shows me what the *other* can be. But to realize this, I must find a way to dismantle the binary us/them classification that positions the *other* as permanently different from me. I turn to Derrida to help me find the way.

Derrida: Deconstructing the Us/Them Dichotomy

Derrida (1996) further illuminates my understanding of a teacher's relationship with the *other*. According to Derrida, we have a constant moral responsibility toward *others:* "If you give up the infinitude of responsibility, there is no responsibility. It is because we act and we live in infinitudes that the responsibility with regard to the other (*autrui*) is irreducible" (p. 86). Like Levinas, Derrida's notion of responsibility connects us to the *other* in a positive sense. Derrida reminds us that educators have an ongoing responsibility to their students, a responsibility to acknowledge their biases and to move beyond them, thus allowing their students' voices to be heard instead of constantly filling the room with their own.

Derrida's theory of deconstruction problematizes the *othering* that takes place in the classroom. Concepts like the binary us/them, which position outsiders on the periphery, are challenged. Deconstruction does not look at these concepts as discrete, separate notions; instead, Derrida's theory shows how the concepts complicate each other. While deconstruction is a process used to unravel meaning within texts, Derrida does not limit text to written discourse. Text is something that occurs in any social interaction, and text is bound by context. Text, when considered in its context, may present the illusion of meaning, but in fact, this meaning is complicated by other meanings around the text. Deconstruction is unmasking the pretext in any given text (Moran, 2000). Therefore, "us" and "them" do not exist in pure forms, always distinct, as the binary might initially suggest. Contextualising *othering* means understanding the historical, social, and political context in which the *othering*

occurs, in order to understand the meaning around the process that positions groups on opposing sides.

Deconstruction allows us to see that these opposites may not in fact be so far apart. They are integrally related, as one cannot exist without the *other*. When I walked by the Roma men on the street and grabbed my bag, I was at the same time "us" and "them." My action demonstrated a barrier between us, but it was the action of a Jewish woman and as an American, two identities that secured me as belonging to "them" in the context of Slovakia. Under the surface, "us" and "them" were not so distinct. Applying Derrida's theory to my "interaction" with these Roma men, I find that the encounter has no singular meaning. How does the meaning change if I consider the marginalized voices of the men whom I *othered?*

Deconstruction helps me understand the positioning of "us" and "them" as artificial and arbitrary. And when I consider the social, political, and historical context behind an instance of *othering,* I am able to begin the process of breaking down the barriers that separate the two. My responsibility to the *other* compels me to do so.

Derrida's (1982) notion of *differance* further expands how I understand what it means to *other* in varying contexts. Derrida created the term *differance* as distinct from *difference* in French to distinguish between to differ and to defer. Derrida explains the notion of *differance* as follows:

> Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences. Such a play, *différance*, is thus no longer simply a concept, but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general. (pp. 3-27 online)

Meaning is contextualized and is in constant motion, ever changing based on the accompanying words and ideas to a text. *Differance*, by constantly altering meaning, allows for the challenging of hierarchies and hegemonies. It creates a space where hidden meaning emerges by deferring popular meaning; that which is counter hegemonic can rise to the surface when dominant meaning is challenged.

Like deconstruction, *differance* contributes to multiple ways of encountering the *other* by changing how we come to understand what it means to *other*. Conceptually, deconstruction and *differance* open up the possibility for the *other* to be interpreted as equal to, not less than. Derrida's exercise of creating a new word, *differance*, which sounds the same as *difference* but has a separate meaning, suggests that things are not always as they appear. The *other* is not like me or unlike me; the *other* is simply *other* and must be viewed as such within its own wholeness and separateness from me, without judgment, without comparison.

Levinas and Derrida provide an image of the *other* as human, as deserving of our respect and responsibility. If we believe in equity and social justice, then we cannot ignore our biases about *others* or underestimate how our biases shape our actions, as well as the experiences and performance of our students. To know my students, I must know myself. To see my students without my filters, I must remove them through careful, intentional reflection.

With philosophers pointing my way, my phenomenon continues to take shape. I have moments of clarity in which I believe that *othering* can be understood. And if it can be understood, it can be dismantled, torn asunder and re-framed in ways that

position *others* on equal planes. To move forward, I begin to flesh out my process for engaging in conversations with teachers to learn of their experiences around *othering*.

The Methodology of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology encourages a deep understanding of a phenomenon, uncovering and opening up meaning by digging through lived experiences. While hermeneutic phenomenology does not offer a specific process, Max van Manen (1997) outlines six components in phenomenological research that serve as a guide, as I seek to gain meaning in my phenomenon: **What is the lived experience of teachers as both *other* to *otherer,* as target and perpetrator?** They include:

1. Turning to the phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world.
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it.
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon.
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon.
6. Balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole. (p. 30)

These methods require reflection, insight, sensitivity to language, and openness to experience.

Turning to the Phenomenon which Seriously Interests us and Commits us to the World

In Chapter One I traced the journey that has led me to my phenomenon and to the path of social justice. In so doing I have engaged in the process of understanding my phenomenon from the beginning. Gadamer (2001) writes:

> At the beginning of every effort to understand is a concern about something: confronted by a question one is to answer, one's knowledge of what one is interpreting is thrown into uncertainty, and this causes one to search for an answer. In order to come up with an answer, the person then begins asking

questions….No, understanding is not something that takes place at the end of humanistic research about an object, it stands at the beginning and governs the whole process of questioning, step by step. (p. 50)

My past has allowed me to unearth questions that open up my phenomenon, understanding its depths. I ask questions throughout the process because my phenomenon is alive; it shifts and moves as I probe further and deeper.

This process of orienting myself to the phenomenon includes an explanation of my pre-understandings as well as a careful formulation of my phenomenological question. I address the assumptions I make regarding my phenomenon, not so I can put them behind me, but so I can come to terms with them and reveal how they may have prevented me from clearly seeing what it means to *other*.

Investigating Experience as we Live it Rather than as we Conceptualize It

Phenomenology is the study of lived experience. I participated in conversations with a couple of teachers in a preliminary focus on experiences with *other* and *otherer* (Chapter Two), and then more fully with the participants of my study. In these conversations I searched for authentic, felt experience, as opposed to theoretical or analytical explanations of experience. I turn to the lived experiences, because they allow me to become more experienced myself (van Manen, 1997). As in Chapter One, I used my personal experience as a starting point. I did this because I can access my experiences in ways no one else can, and because I know that my experiences are not unique to me; they are quite possibly the experiences of *others*.

To help me understand lived experience more deeply, I have turned to etymological sources in my writing that "put us in touch with an original form of life where the terms still had living ties to the lived experiences from which they

originally sprang" (van Manen, 1997, p. 59). Knowing the etymology of words allows

me to see how original meanings have morphed and to consider what these

transformations mean in the context of lived experience.

My conversations with participants, in which I tap into their lived experiences,

provide much of my textual data in Chapters Four and Five. Their experiences enrich

how I come to see my phenomenon by adding new dimensions, by taking me closer

to the heart of what it means to *other* in my quest for understanding this phenomenon.

In my conversations with participants, my phenomenological question was my guide,

as I attempted to obtain full descriptions of concrete experiences in their wholeness.

Gadamer (1975/2004) clarifies the purpose of conversations in

phenomenological research:

> Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs
> to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other,
> truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the
> other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but
> what he says. (p. 387)

In conversing with teachers and learning of their experiences around *othering*, I

cannot *know* my participants or fully *know* what they have lived through. This would

be inauthentic, perhaps patronizing. I seek to absorb what they say in ways that allow

me to create new meaning about the *othering* process, respecting the truth that

emanates from the lived nature of their experiences.

In addition to my personal experience and the experiential descriptions of my

participants, I turn to experiential descriptions in various story forms to help me

unpack what it means to *other*. In Chapter Two, Vianne, the protagonist in *Chocolat*,

lives as an ally, refusing to *other,* when everyone around her partakes. I dig into her

experience trying to find a way to capture what she has done and why. Langston

Hughes' poem *Dream Deferred* frames the educational experience of students of

color for me, capturing as only a poem can, the pain of difference. Many additional

sources help me to understand the lived experience of *othering* and bring forward in

stark detail the numerous ways in which we can be both *other* and *otherer.*

Reflecting on the Essential Themes which Characterize the Phenomenon

Reflecting on essential themes allows me to explore the many meanings

inherent in my phenomenon. A phenomenon such as *othering* is multi-dimensional

and, therefore, has multiple meanings. Analyzing themes that emerge from lived

experience allows me to access the multiple meanings and to communicate them

textually. In phenomenological research the concept of "theme" is a way to open up

meaning. Identifying themes is not a process bound by set rules; rather, it is a "free

act of 'seeing'" (van Manen, 1997, p. 79). In seeking meaning, we mine for the

essence of our phenomenon through thematic reflection. The theme gives order to the

writing process, but its purpose is to provide an entry point into meaning-making.

Thematizing gives structure to experience, though the themes that emerge are never

generalizations of experience; they are unique to the specific phenomenon studied, as

explored in singular experiences.

Themes do not emerge as the result of a researcher's trained skill. They

emerge from a desire to make sense of a phenomenon. As an educator who

experienced difficulty around conversations on difference in the classroom, and who

has experienced being both an *other* and an *otherer*, I have a deep desire to

understand how experiences around *othering* shape teachers' interactions with their

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students. The themes I see help me translate what my participants feel into words that give meaning to my phenomenon. Theme "gives shape to the shapeless" and gets at the heart of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1997, p. 88). While the concept of theme may seem like a closed categorization, in phenomenological research it actually represents an openness to the range of meaning in lived experience.

Van Manen (1997) identifies three ways in which to isolate thematic statements. In the first approach, the researcher views the text as a whole and tries to find a phrase that captures the significance of the text in its entirety. In the second approach, the researcher reads the text and looks for the statements that seem particularly meaningful in relation to the phenomenon being studied. In the third approach, the researcher seeks meaning in every line or cluster of lines in the text, asking what each sentence reveals about the experience described.

In Chapter Two, I shared themes that emerged from my preliminary conversations with Judy and Jaime. In seeking these themes, in excavating meaning, I followed van Manen's second approach, selectively highlighting the statements that revealed to me a new dimension of *othering*. In the conversations with my five participants, I continued to use the selective approach to isolate themes. Identifying themes presented in Chapters Four and Five was an organic process. After participating in conversations, transcribing them, and reading them multiple times, themes emerged, patterns became evident. After identifying themes, I continued to unearth meaning by transforming the idea within the theme into written language.

As I engaged in thematizing and meaning making, I was guided by four fundamental themes which Van Manen (1997) refers to as "lifeworld existentials":

lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relation. These lifeworld existentials do not frame my themes, rather they guide my reflection into the themes I uncover, providing "categories for the process of phenomenological question posing, reflecting and writing" (p. 102).

Describing the Phenomenon through the Art of Writing and Rewriting

Phenomenology is a writing process. Through writing about *othering*, I seek to create new meaning and new understanding. During this process I encountered various types of silence: the silence that results from ideas that have not yet been formed into words; the silence that confronts me when ideas simply cannot be put in words for when they do, they lose their essence; and the silence that comes from a powerful encounter that leaves me speechless because of its revealing truth (van Manen, 1997). But I did not fear these silences. As a good listener, I must be attuned to the meaning of silence and the power of silence to communicate volumes.

As I negotiate silences, I use story telling to reveal meaning that explanation cannot. In Chapter One, I note the significance of stories in our lives. Stories nurture the soul; they create bonds by illustrating shared experience. My research includes multiple narratives: my personal experiences, the stories of my teachers, and the anecdotes I find in literature and other sources. All of these stories reveal the essence of my phenomenon, not because they are illustrations, but because they are embodiments, bringing forth a depth and a comprehensibility that pure explanation does not allow. They are examples of the elements of life that make life what it is, human experience, and they lead the reader to reflect.

Through my writing, I engage in reflection. The reflective act brings meaning to me. My writing displays the process of my reflection, not the results. I do not write to tell findings; I write to find meaning in the tellings shared with me. But as I write, I know that I cannot possibly communicate all of the meaning I create, for some meaning cannot and should not be expressed. Phenomenological writing says as much implicitly as it does explicitly (van Manen, 1997). I write and rewrite my way through my phenomenon, and with each rereading and each rewriting, I ask new questions, coming closer to understanding what it means to be both *other* and *otherer*.

Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Pedagogical Relation to the Phenomenon

As I noted in Chapter One, my understanding of inequity in society is inextricably linked to education. The power structures that position certain groups above *others* play out in the classroom in student-teacher and student-student interactions. As a social institution, the classroom replicates the power dynamics in society. Thus, when I seek to understand teachers' experiences around *othering*, it is always in the belief that reflecting on our experiences will improve our relationships with students. I write from the perspective of a social justice educator. While in my research I try to deepen my understanding of *othering* through the exploration of lived experiences, I can only do so with a pedagogical interest, with a concern for responsible teaching, and with the lives of students in mind.

When I begin talking about abstract ideas around *othering*, I must reign myself in. I remember the lives of the Roma children who are placed in "special" schools because they "don't know how to clean themselves." I think of Cynthia, a young Mexican girl whose kindergarten teacher expects her to "snap out of it" (Valdes,

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1996, p. 144) in response to culturally-based behavior differences, and predicts she will be in the lowest reading the next year. I remember and I wonder what gives us the audacity to expect all children to be like "us." While focusing on the experiences of teachers, I remain mindful of the influence of these experiences on their relations with children.

Balancing the Research Context by Considering the Parts and Whole

The research and writing process being entwined in phenomenology, it is possible that the researcher can get lost on the path to meaning-making. There are so many possible turns to take on my journey to understanding *othering*, that I am mindful not to get lost along the way. I must be sure that each part contributes to the whole I am trying to create. When I detour, it is purposeful, for detours can add powerful meaning to my understanding, or they can muddle it greatly. I take great care in reviewing the ground that I have laid each step of the way, ensuring that it helps me understand teachers' experiences as *other* and *otherer*.

While these six components might seem linear at first glance, they in fact embody the essence of phenomenology as a process of moving back and forth, in and out, through a text, always seeking to open up meaning a bit more. Through these activities I uncover how I came to my phenomenon; explore sources that illustrate the phenomenon; interpret the writings of philosophers whose work grounds my research; excavate the meaning in my conversations with study participants by identifying themes that emerge; and finally, consider the implications of the meanings I have found for the field of teacher education.

Teacher Participants and Engagement in the Journey

To explore how teachers experience *othering,* both as *other* and as *otherer*, I identified five participants, teachers in K-12 educational settings in a mid-Atlantic community, who have been teaching for at least four years. The participant group includes a mix of grade levels, subjects, and years of experience, as well as race, gender, religion, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. The group consists of two people of color, two males, one lesbian, two who identify as other than Christian, and two who identify their ethnicity as other than European-American. Some participants identify with more than one of the identities listed, as there are only five participants; for example, one participant is an African American male.

Much of the literature on teacher attitudes toward students focuses on white teachers, thereby ignoring many identities that can represent differences between teachers and students. In an effort to explore the complexity of the phenomenon of *othering*, I engaged a diverse participant group. The participant group is familiar with *othering* and with self-reflection, either through their formal education or through their professional development opportunities, and all participants are committed to social justice teaching.

To identify participants, I turned to the many contacts I have in public and private schools in the Washington metropolitan area from my employment with the Anti-Defamation League and my current work as a facilitator of anti-bias workshops. These contacts include teachers, counselors, and staff developers in middle schools, high schools, and administrative offices. I identified teachers through word of mouth, reaching out to my school-based contacts who are familiar with the concept of

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othering from our work together on anti-bias education. Based on recommendations, I initially e-mailed prospective participants, introducing myself and my research, and asked them to e-mail me if they were interested in learning more. I followed up by phone with those who expressed interest. After a preliminary phone conversation, I met with each teacher who seemed to be a good match for my study to determine if they met my selection criteria, and to share with them my methodology as well as the details of participation (see Appendix A, Cover Letter). All participants were invited to the study in person and were given the opportunity to ask questions (see Appendix B, Informed Consent Form). The consent form was signed and given to me at the time of these first conversations.

Conversational Engagement

To begin, I had a one-on-one audio-recorded conversation with each teacher at a mutually agreed upon place and time. In these conversations my goal was to obtain what Husserl refers to as the "original, pre-reflective, pre-theoretical attitude" of everyday life (as cited in van Manen, 1997, p. 7). While phenomenological inquiry does not approach conversations as pre-determined with pre-set questions, my research included questions such as, Can you share a time when you were a target of prejudice or discrimination? What did it *feel* like to be treated differently because of who you are? What was your response? Can you share a time when you discriminated against someone else? How did that experience make you feel? Since these conversations were not scripted, they ranged in time from 1.5 hours to 2 hours. I then transcribed each conversation and shared the transcription with each participant for review prior to the next conversation.

Following the individual conversations, I invited participants to respond to a guided reflection on the discussion in writing, elaborating on their responses in ways that further explore their experiences. The nature of the conversations, discussing experiences as both target and perpetrator in situations of prejudice and discrimination, invites reflection that extends beyond the confines of a taped exchange. Additionally, some individuals feel more comfortable writing rather than speaking. The guided reflection questions differed for each participant, as they were based on the initial conversation, but in essence the purpose of the reflection was to transition from personal experiences outside of the classroom to experiences interacting with students in the classroom, which was the focus of the second one-on-one conversation. I asked participants not to spend more than one or two hours on the written reflection.

I opened the second one-on-one conversation with each teacher by giving them the opportunity to add further to our initial conversations and to ask questions stemming from the first conversation's transcripts as well as the guided written reflection. The primary focus of the second conversation was on teachers' interactions in the classroom with students whose backgrounds differ from theirs. Questions included the following: Can you share a time when you felt like an outsider in the school context? Can you share a time when you treated a student differently because of his or her background? How did the experience make you feel? In what ways did the student respond to you? The length of this conversation also ranged from 1.5 to 2 hours. Again, I transcribed these conversations and shared them with each participant.

Following the second conversation, I asked participants to spend no more than one hour completing a second guided written reflection. The purpose of this reflection was to bridge the individual conversations and the group conversation. In the group conversation, participants discussed their experiences together. I opened the group conversation with an identity exercise, which I modeled. From this exercise, many of the participants' experiences came forth. The group setting gave teachers the opportunity to consider similarities and differences in experience, stimulating further intense discovery. Following the exercise, I shared with the group the themes I had identified from their first conversation and we discussed them in detail. The group conversation lasted two hours.

Thematizing Process

Throughout this period of time with participants, I searched for themes from the transcriptions that emerged, using the process previously described. Because phenomenology is a writing process, I wrote my way through the research. In hermeneutic phenomenology research and writing are aspects of one process (van Manen, 1997), and thus how I understand my phenomenon takes shape as I write my way to meaning. Through my writing I seek to reveal the "lived quality" of my participants' experiences and to achieve what Buytendijk refers to as the "phenomenological nod" (van Manen, p. 27), recognition of the description of lived experience as something that resonates for the reader. My writing concludes with pedagogical insights for the classroom teacher and teacher education programs. While critical reflection is a process for uncovering one's place in the world with *others*, as

both an individual and as part of a greater system, the implications of this research focus specifically on teachers' interactions with their students in the school context.

Van Manen (1997) writes that the end of the research endeavor for educators is "pedagogical competence: knowing how to act tactfully in pedagogic situations on the basis of a carefully edified thoughtfulness" (p. 8). Tact, as van Manen describes, is the practice of being oriented to *others*. Engaging in tactful practice requires overcoming one's self-centeredness. Doing so allows me to see the *other* in his or her separateness from me. Experiencing the *other*, hearing the *other*, de-centers my worldview. Tact is acting appropriately in a given situation. It is knowing how to respond to the child who feels *othered* in the classroom, whether by fellow students or by the teacher him or herself. A tactful teacher enhances what is unique in a child, as opposed to a tactless teacher who fails to acknowledge differences in the belief that such an approach leads to equality. Of course, a teacher must be open to embracing the *otherness* in a child's uniqueness, which, as we know, is not always easy. Van Manen's notion of tact in teaching provides an opening to understanding how teachers can move forward from their biases toward care.

In the next chapter, I share the stories of the teachers with whom I engage in conversation, listening to their experiences around *othering*, searching for moments of tact and care. I remain mindful that my research is about children—about learning "how we should talk and act with them and how we should live by their side" (van Manen, 1997, p. 139).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDING WHAT ANCHORS US IN THIS WORLD

In the telling and retelling
of their stories,
they create communities
of memory.
(Takaki, 1993, p. 14)

To help me understand the process of *othering* and the relationship between *othering* in our personal lives and our participation in, as well as our mitigation of, *othering* in the classroom, I invited five teachers to join my journey. I feel privileged to know these individuals and am inspired by their commitment to social justice, their passion for teaching, their humor, their authenticity, and their willingness to share painful memories with tremendous courage and honesty. To paraphrase Takaki (1993), the participants in my study are not merely *other* and *otherer*, they are individuals with minds, voices, and wills. Their voices, the stories they have chosen to share, have become a community of memory.

The five teachers in my study offer a wide range of life experience. **Curtis** (pseudonym), an African American male with 14 years of experience, is a high school social studies teacher who teaches in a diverse inner city school. I first met Curtis a few years ago when he served on a diversity committee I chaired that was tasked with analyzing a national essay contest and considering how to diversify the applicant pool. Curtis's commitment to his students and his diverse learning environment struck me, as did his approach to teaching social studies in a way that connected students' lives to global concerns. **Claudia** (pseudonym), a white female who's been teaching for 16 years, is a fifth grade science teacher at a progressive private school located in the suburbs. Claudia and I met at the start of my first day substitute teaching in her

school. From our initial conversation, Claudia's reflective thinking and connection to her students and school were clear. Her colleague **Adriana**, a biracial lesbian with 7 years of classroom experience, is a 7th and 8th grade social studies teacher. I met Adriana at a dinner party Claudia held and instantly felt as if I had met a kindred spirit, someone who is as invested in equity issues as I am. **Elisabeth** (pseudonym), a 1.5 generation Chinese-American female who was in the classroom for 4 years, taught biology and special education at the high school level in an inner city school. Elisabeth and I had a class together in graduate school, and after a semester of conversations together, her philosophy of schooling and approach to teaching and learning clearly parallel mine. **Daniel**, a Jewish male who has been in the classroom in various capacities for 9 years, is a special education and math teacher in a rural high school. Daniel and I met when I facilitated a peer training workshop at his school. Daniel served as one of the program's coordinators. From our first meeting, in which he talked easily of the many kinds of bias he has experienced, his commitment to social justice was palpable. Each of these teachers, whom we will come to know better through their shared experiences, has felt and participated in acts of prejudice and discrimination. And while reflecting on these happenings can be challenging, none of them shy away from the responsibility of contemplating what it means to be an *other* and *otherer*.

From our conversations, several themes emerge, revealing the universality, yet at the same time the individuality, of the experience around *othering*. I learn that our experiences often are shaped by within-group sentiment. Our feelings about our own community and from our community together influence our encounters. I also have

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come to understand that the degree of proximity to those we *other* and by whom we are *othered* affects the pain we feel. In listening to my participants, I further begin to recognize that our own baggage can create misunderstandings that influence how we experience and interpret *othering*. Additionally, I realize the role of personal growth in the process of *othering* and begin to wonder if participation in *othering* is a rite of passage for many. And finally, I reflect on the range of responses to *othering* and the notion that our experiences as *other* can, in fact, empower us to create future change.

As I consider these themes, I use the metaphor of flowing water to help me capture the changes we undergo, living as both *other* and *otherer*. Contemplating what our identity means to us, how it develops and shapes our interactions with *others*, I wonder what keeps us anchored to our true selves. Water is a basic need of all humans, an "elementary thing" (Doll, 2000, p. viii), for without water we cannot survive. While the movements of the water reflect our change and growth as beings in the world, the water itself represents our sustenance, what we need to stay alive. Doll connects the movement of water to the practice of teaching. Teaching that encourages imagination and an openness to engaging with the *other* is fluid like running water— without bounds, without limits, "utterly free" (p. 146).

To begin my exploration into the meaning that each of these themes brings to the process of *othering*, I focus on the nature of community. What is a community and what does it mean when we reject our community or our community rejects us? How do we create a community in the classroom, a safe place where our students can be true to themselves?

Ebbs and Flows: The Fluidity of Community

Community is from the French *communite*, meaning "common, public, shared by all or many." A community provides a sense of belonging, of being one among many, of being safe and accepted. But what happens when we reject our community or our community rejects us? What becomes of our need to belong? "Everyone wants to belong," a friend tells me. To belong means "to go along with" or "relate to." "Belonging is deep…It is the living and passionate presence of the soul" (O'Donohue, 1999, p. 2). Finding a place to belong is a process that nourishes the soul. When we do not belong, we long to find a place of comfort, a place to call home. But we must be truthful in our search for belonging. We cannot simply "go along with" a group or community out of a desperate need to be one among many. We must find that which feeds the soul, that which provides goodness and a sense of fulfillment, allowing for our continued inner growth. We cannot always choose where we belong—sometimes we are born into communities—but when we can, we must do so carefully, minding our deeper callings.

Community contributes to people's sense of belonging. As human beings, we are relational. We grow by relating to *others*, through our relations with *others*. And when our community is ruptured, either by our own doing or our community's, our relations become fractured. But what becomes of us and what becomes of that community?

What is a community? Is it a place, is it a group of people that share interests, values, history, and norms, or is it the people who live all of these abstract notions? Putnam (2000) observes:

> Each of us derives some sense of belonging from among the various communities to which we might, in principle, belong. For most of us, our deepest sense of belonging is to our most intimate social networks, especially family and friends. Beyond that perimeter lie work, church, neighborhood, civic life, and the assortment of other "weak ties" that constitute our personal stock of social capital. (p. 274)

Social capital refers to the relationships and connections between individuals—networks that foster trustworthiness, reciprocity and other norms valued by communities (Putnam, 2000). Thus, we can find communities and connections in virtually every aspect of our lives. What happens, though, when our feelings about our community shift? When we leave a community, does it remain within us? Adriana, Elisabeth, and Curtis each experience change with regard to their community ties. Through their stories, I begin to unpack the role community plays in our experiences around *othering*.

Within Group Sentiment: Feelings about our Own Community

In *The Believer* (2001), loosely based on a true story, Danny Balint is a young Jewish male who becomes a neo-Nazi, living dual lives, straddling two diametrically opposed communities. At home he lives with and cares for his father, a religious Jew. But when he steps into his basement bedroom, we see his other half. Nazi flags adorn the walls, and neo-Nazi paraphernalia abound. He attends meetings with neo-Nazis and professes his hatred for Jews. During my time at the Anti-Defamation League, I recall an incident with many parallels. A Jewish college student created a neo-Nazi hate group. He attempted to gain credibility in the hate group community by maintaining that he was not Jewish, that his step father was, but this fact remained questionable. In my conversations with Adriana, she shares that her mother hates Chinese, though she is one quarter Chinese herself. And Adriana struggles with her

own bias against homosexuality, though she identifies as a lesbian. How do we come to hate who we are? We may deny or hide our identity for reasons of personal safety or fear of being ostracized, but hating a part of our identity to the extent that we discriminate against *others* who have that identity represents a level of self-damage that necessitates an examination of the role of society in our lives.

Hating who we are stems in part from hearing repeated messages from society and those close to us that we are not good enough. Sears (1996) shares the messages that formed her self-hatred:

> One of my first memories is of my white/pink mother leaning over the crib and saying to my brother, "You'll be all right. You're only half Indian." It was not her words as much as their desperate sound that let me know that "Indian" was "bad." (p. 291)

Taken from her divorced parents by the court and raised in an orphanage, Sears explains, "Internalized oppression became my reality—first came pain, then an injured perception of myself" (p. 292). And later in school Sears faces a series of conflicts, both internal and external, which contribute further to her self-loathing: "[These conflicts] all created shame inside me, and self-hatred. My effort to be in harmony then was to hide what I saw as deficiencies or abnormalities" (p. 294). Firmly entrenched, Sears' self-loathing manifests in multiple personalities, enabling her to cope with the trauma in her life. The messages from society about her ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, tell her she is not worthy. The result is a level of self-hatred so deep that it takes decades for her to recover.

Adriana is a lesbian. She is in a relationship with a woman and feels fairly confident in who she is; in other words, her identification as a lesbian is not a "phase" she is going through. Adriana is also Catholic and her Catholic upbringing presents a

problem in terms of how she feels about her identity. She describes her internal

struggle attending a gay pride parade with her partner.

> Right away we're accosted by these two guys in leather and my first
> thought was "This is why I'm not out and proud"…and I was turned
> off…but then I was like, ok…We go to this booth…and every other
> word out of this lesbian's mouth was the F-bomb…So, I kept thinking,
> 'This is not good, this is not pride. I'm not proud. I am ashamed. I am
> very ashamed'…And then there was a kissing booth.…I am not into
> PDA (Public Display of Affection) at all…But just before we get to
> the booth, there's this lesbian couple, and they start making out like no
> tomorrow. And it's hot, so what do they start doing? Ripping their
> clothes off. I was so disturbed. And I couldn't tell if I was so disturbed
> because they were kissing in public or because it was two women
> kissing in public. And there was a part of me that was like, ew two
> women kissing in public, that's so gross. And is it gross because that's
> what your mother has told you, that's what the Catholic church has
> told you, that's what all these people who told you that you're gross,
> or is it that it's PDA and you tell middle school-ers that they're not
> allowed to do PDA? So there was this part of me that was really torn
> and then it switched to like, wait a minute, if you think that's gross,
> then what do you think you're doing? And then it was this cycle of
> that's gross, self-loathing, that's gross…It was really disturbing and it
> bothered me that I was even thinking that. Am I allowed to think that
> that's gross and still be gay? I wrestled with that for the rest of the day.
> (Adriana)

From childhood we internalize society's notions of sex and gender. Herek (2000)

writes that such norms create challenges for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and

transgendered people who "usually experience some degree of negative feeling

toward themselves when they first recognize their homosexuality or bisexuality in

adolescence or adulthood…Internalized homophobia often makes the process of

identity formation more difficult" (p. 281). Adriana's feelings of confusion and

discomfort in the midst of her own community are not uncommon.

As a lesbian, Adriana identifies with a community that is ostracized by her

faith community. Her childhood religious community no longer accepts her and,

while the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community welcomes her, she may not be ready to accept them fully. She resides in the in-between, the space where she is not fully at home in either world.

Casey (1993) writes, "If the lived body is a 'place of passage,' then it is itself a creature of the between. As such, the body mediates between my awareness of a place and that place itself, moving me between one place and another…" (p. 128). In the in-between, Adriana finds herself in an "intermediate zone between the extremities of light and dark, inside and outside…" (Casey, 1993, p. 128). As a young Catholic, Adriana resides on the inside of her Catholic community and her family, provided she adheres to the family's two cardinal rules: don't come home pregnant and don't come home telling us you're gay. But once Adriana reveals that she is a lesbian, her position shifts to the outside. As a "creature of the in-between," perhaps Adriana is best positioned between her Catholic community and her LGBT community, allowing her body to guide her to the place that is best suited for her soul.

Residing in the space between various communities with distinct cultures involves living with tension. Aoki (2005c) notes:

> Indwelling here is a dwelling in the midst of differences, often trying
> and difficult. It is a place alive with tension. In dwelling here, the quest
> is not so much to rid ourselves of tension, for to be tensionless is to be
> dead like a limp violin string, but more so to seek appropriately
> attuned tension, such that the sound of the tensioned string resounds
> well. (p. 382)

Adriana need not choose one community over another, in an attempt to get rid of the tension. There is no choice to make here. Instead, she must determine how she can manage the tension that exists when her communities, or their ways of being, collide.

Green (1996) lives with this tension and concludes that we must look beyond who we are supposed to be, as determined by dominant groups:

> As a gay Black academic, I have been struggling with the ways in which the academy undermines the value of my personal experience, the Black community chooses to ignore the relevance of my sexuality, and the gay community fails to acknowledge the struggles I face as a Black man. Although I know that the oppositional ideas of the various communities of which I am apart are often difficult to avoid, I still feel that I am a part of these communities simultaneously…. In order to begin to live life as a whole instead of performing it in parts, we must undiscipline ourselves and step out of the predetermined ideas about who we are becoming, and who we are supposed to be. We must also acknowledge the fact that we live in multiple realities that cannot always conform to the efficient compartmentalized identities that are forced upon us as seemingly efficient systems of categorizing who we are. (p. 253)

Our identities tie us to our communities regardless of how we feel about them and how they feel about each *other*. Perhaps we can find our place by abandoning the expectations and wants of our various communities in an attempt to focus on who *we* say we are, who *we* want to become.

Aoki (2005g) calls this lived space of between the "inter" of interculturalism. He illustrates this in his response to a study that examined identity among Canadian Jews, noting that he has always called himself and been called a Japanese Canadian. He wonders if it matters whether Canadian is a noun or an adjective. Is this a question of semantics or identity? Aoki's question illuminates the tension that exists in the in-between and highlights the uniqueness of experiences for different groups. Not all immigrants have the same experience.

In reading Aoki, I am reminded of my mother's explanation of Jews as outsiders. Jews in Germany were never considered German. They were considered German Jews. Their difference was put on them, first by name and later by a yellow

star. American/Canadian/European Jews will always be Jewish first as a way of maintaining their outsider status. It is likely that some Jews today call themselves American Jews as a way of fronting their religion or ethnicity over their nationality, but we cannot forgot the history behind the appellation. It is a history steeped in oppression, and this history lives on in the tension of the in-between for American Jews like myself.

In returning to Adriana, I wonder, what becomes of her faith as a result of this indwelling? To what extent does a Catholic who commits a sin in the eyes of the Church suffer from guilt? "Catholic guilt" is a commonly used phrase referring to the emotions some Catholics feel when they commit a sin according to the Church. One such sin is identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Can such guilt present an obstacle to complete self-acceptance? How does our community membership contribute to the development and evolution of our self-identity?

Identity and community.

The groups with which we identify can change, depending on our context and recent experiences. Before I had children, I did not identify as a mother. "Mother," as an identity, was not a part of my consciousness. Now, with two small children, being a mother is a primary identity for me. Everything I see and do, all that I experience, is through the lens of being a mother. While events in our lives, such as giving birth, can shape our identity, so too can questions we have about ourselves. In searching for who we are and what matters to us, we venture on a journey, an exploration of self. After much consideration, we may find, in fact, that parts of us have changed over time, but our core remains the same. Our identity shapes the filter though which we

see the world. As our identity changes, our filter and our perspective change. As such, we come to know people, places, and communities in new ways, as if we are seeing them for the first time. If our innermost essence remains the same, why, then, should our connection to our communities change? The child who wants to be loved, still wants to be loved after coming out to her or his family.

Erikson (1968) describes identity formation as follows:

…a process "located" *in the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture*, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of those two identities….In discussing identity, as we now see, we cannot separate personal growth and communal change…(p. 22)

Adriana's identity development is located within herself but also within her community. Her identity is inherently linked to her communities, as a participant in their culture. Erikson highlights the reciprocal nature of relationships formed at the communal level. Adriana's identity shift affects not only herself, but all of the members of her various communities with whom she has a relationship. As a lesbian, she presents her Church, and the members of her family who are believers in this Church, with questions and challenges. Can she love herself and be a member of this Church? Can her family love her? Can she love them?

Our social, cultural, and political contexts shape our identity formation:

In psychological terms, identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him. (Erikson, 1968, pp. 22-23)

According to Erikson, our identities are shaped in part by how the world sees us. This process complicates our understanding of who we are. Torrechila (1996), a Latino male, writes, "My identity is constructed, inherited, chosen, assigned, and some times distorted by those who, for whatever reason, insist on granting me less than full membership in this society" (p. 265). If the world does not accept who we are, can *we* fully embrace who we are?

Do we fight what our communities say about our identities, or do we buy in to their perspectives and visions, thereby denying our true selves? Green (1996) describes his attempts to hide his sexual identity in order to remain a part of his African American community:

> My fear of being rejected from the only community that I had ever known compelled me to make my mother and the entire Black community proud. I acted as if I too believed that only white people were gay…. I wanted to excel, to be the exceptional Black child. I felt that if I were exceedingly good in every other way, then perhaps if my family and community ever "found me Out" they might overlook my sexual flaw. (p. 258)

Green takes on the stereotypical notions of what it means to be gay in an attempt to conceal his identity. Consequently he resides in a place of "silence and denial" (p. 259). When considering coming out, Green says he dreamed of finding a nurturing gay community that would accept his sexuality. He found this, but his reality, unlike his dream, was complicated by the matter of race. Green found it difficult to be understood as a gay Black male with different experiences from gay white males. Like Adriana, Green tries to make sense of multiple worlds.

Adriana struggles to connect to her various communities once her identity changes, but attachment to one's community can take a different path. Elisabeth

grows into her Chinese community as she matures. She reflects on how her

connection to China has changed.

> …coming back here for graduate school has been really helpful
> because I have a couple of classmates who are from China and I think
> my identity as a Chinese person has evolved in terms of not being so
> Hong Kong specific and being like…I see Hong Kong, China, I mean
> Hong Kong is China now. When I was younger I used to definitely
> correct people and be like it's Hong Kong, it's not China and now I
> see less of a difference. I don't know if part of it is the Olympic thing
> in China but I feel like I have more of a nationalistic sense of pride.
> It's something that has changed and evolved in my life…and part of it
> has to do with [when] I went back to Hong Kong in 2005…and it's the
> first time in my life since I moved from Hong Kong that I was
> surrounded by Asian people. I was there for 3 weeks and I remember
> while I was there I felt a sense of peace and it made me realize that it
> was like the first time I felt like I didn't have to deal with stereotypes
> and discrimination. And I think when I came back to America …ever
> since that happened I've just been really excited to see Asian people,
> as opposed to like when I was a teenager… (Elisabeth)

Elisabeth feels a "sense of peace" being among Asians, and her peace is defined by

not having to experience stereotypes and discrimination. For Elisabeth, in the United

States, prejudice and discrimination against Asians is wholly acceptable, and each

experience she has reminds her of her outsider role: "I feel like in terms of our

conversations even about what's politically correct and knowing what you can and

cannot say, overt discrimination against Asian Americans is still acceptable"

(Elisabeth).

In her school, Elisabeth must deal on a regular basis with her physical

appearance, which positions her automatically on the outside in her largely African

American school.

> …first of all, once I speak I think the kids are like "Oh, ok, she can speak
> English. She sounds like us." And actually that's one of the questions that
> always comes up, "How come you speak English like us?" And then we
> engage in conversation, "What do you mean I speak English like you?"

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And they're like, "You don't have an accent." And I go through my whole life history with them and, it's like, if I come over to America when I'm younger, I'm able to learn the language better, and just because someone speaks with an accent doesn't mean they're not intelligent or they don't understand what you're saying. It's not a reason for you to make fun of people. (Elisabeth)

Ronald Takaki (1993) describes a similar sentiment, feeling as an outsider as an Asian American while riding in a taxi on his way to a conference on multiculturalism:

The rearview mirror reflected a white man in his forties. "How long have you been in this country?" he asked. "All my life," I replied, wincing. "I was born in the United States." With a strong southern drawl, he remarked: "I was wondering because your English is excellent!" Then, as I had many times before, I explained: "My grandfather came here from Japan in the 1880s. My family has been here, in America, for over a hundred years." He glanced at me in the mirror. Somehow I did not look "American" to him; my eyes and complexion looked foreign. (p. 1)

Sadly, sentiments toward the Chinese community in the United States have not changed much over the past century. Takaki (1993) writes of a Chinese immigrant's conversation with an interviewer from Stanford University in the 1920's: "Make American people realize that Chinese people are humans. I think very few American people really know anything about Chinese" (p. 15). And so, being in Asia, fully immersed in her community and surrounded by people who look like her, gives Elisabeth a feeling of safety, where she does not have to worry about being the *other*, where her membership in a community is not threatened or questioned. She does not have to worry about surprising comments regarding how good her English is, nor does she have to deal with the expectation that she does not speak the predominant language of the country. Elisabeth feels strengthened by her visit and has a stronger tie to her community when she returns to the United States. While Adriana's sentiments for her LGBT community remain complicated and tenuous based on her

relationship to her Catholic community, Elisabeth's ties to her Chinese community have been reinforced. Is community, therefore, a fluid notion?

Our identity is not fixed. It changes over time and even from moment to moment, depending on what our daily interactions bring forth. Green (1996) writes, "The parameters of my identity are not constrained by a single static border—my identity is fluid and flexible" (p. 253). And as our identity shifts, the communities with which we identify, the strength of our connection to each community, as well as the make up of each community change, illustrating their own fluidity. As if traveling through a body of water, our connections to our communities ebb and flow, following the changes in our identity.

Hall (1999), in his discussion of the Caribbean diaspora experience and cultural identity, speaks of this community's ability to cross boundaries and to transcend space and time. And as the community transcends borders, its essence transforms. The Caribbean experience lives through the diaspora, but the fluidity of both identity and community has resulted in a cultural identity and experience that is wholly different from those who have remained in the Caribbean.

Our sense of community and belonging reflect who we are. O'Donohue (1999) writes:

> Our ways of belonging in the world should never be restricted to or fixated on one kind of belonging that remains stagnant. If you listen to the voices of your own longing, they will constantly call you to new styles of belonging which are energetic and mirror the complexity of your life as you deepen and intensify your presence on earth. (p. 4)

Our belonging is temporal, remaining flexible and responsive to our growth and evolution. Understanding this notion of temporality, we see that fluidity is a core element in our relationships with our myriad communities.

Internalizing dominant perspectives.

Returning to Elisabeth, her experiences reveal that her connection to her community is not entirely positive. In discussing perceptions of Asian men and women, Elisabeth shares, "When I think about Asian American sexuality, I definitely see male sexuality being emasculated…Being someone in an interracial relationship, my partner is not Asian American, and I'm like 'they got to me' and so I don't see Asian men as sexy and attractive" (Elisabeth). Elisabeth expresses a concern that she has internalized outsider stereotypes of her own community. In reflecting further, she concludes that perhaps men in her community have done the same, thus impacting her choice of a partner.

> I think I'm a tomboy still. My sister and I have actually talked about this because…her boyfriend right now is half Chinese, half Black, and we've talked about the kind of guys we attract, because we feel like our femininity is not what Asian males' version of Asian femininity should be, so as a result our dating pool does not include Asian men.

Elisabeth's sense of community is at times strained by perspectives and expectations placed on her by groups with greater social influence and power. By not meeting the stereotype of the sexualized Asian female, Elisabeth turns to other communities for support. But from where does this notion of the Asian female emanate? Like many stereotypes that translate into attitudes and ways of seeing people, the notion of the sexualized Asian female is rooted in Western perceptions of the East. Prasso (2005) explains, "Our perspectives are misshaped—contorted—by centuries of

misunderstandings built on mythologies, fantasies, fairy tales, and fears. We in the West see the East through distorted eyes, through an Orientalized filter of what I call 'Asian Mystique'" (p. xi). But sexuality is only one component of the Asian Mystique. Said (1978) criticizes the West's historical representation of the East as "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal.'" (p. 40). He continues, "Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elide the Orient's difference with its weakness" (p. 204). He asks, "How does one represent other cultures? What is another culture?" (p. 325), prompting us to think critically about our representations of the *other*.

On the sidewalk of a large public university, a university comedy group known as The Agency scrawls on the sidewalk in chalk to advertise their humor. Things like "The Agency shot JFK" catch students' attention. But when they scrawl "The Agency loves <u>Asian</u> girls," on the sidewalk, they enter the domain of perpetuating sexist and racist stereotypes. In the words of one Asian American male university employee: "I would not want my daughter to see that." The chalk remained on the sidewalk for weeks, with virtually no one voicing concern about the stereotypes it reinforced. How would the diverse university respond if the chalk had read, "The Agency loves <u>Black</u> girls." We cannot know the answer, but when asked, the students in my intergroup dialogue class on this same campus express that they think people would have reacted strongly, making their concerns known to the university administration.

Is it problematic to have a sexual preference for a certain group of people?

Prasso (2005) says a preference in sexual attraction is normal until the line is crossed:

> What isn't normal, however, is when preference crosses the invisible line, when Asian and Asian-American women on the receiving end feel…objectified and valued not for who they are as people, but for their race or perceptions of the culture they come from. (p. 141)

Prasso's (2005) analysis of the Asian Mystique found that Asian women feel perceived as submissive, obedient, and obliging. Mizuno (2005), an Asian American female, writes about her experiences around the "Asian fetish" as a student at Harvard Business School:

> I can't help but think that some of it is men's chauvinistic fantasy about petite, reserved, submissive women…. Is this about American men, tired of Anglo-Saxon feminists, seeking more traditional Asian women who would be dependent on them and make them feel good about themselves? (¶ 5-6)

What are the implications when we assume a group of people will act a certain way? What happens when educators assume Asian students will be quiet or reserved? Do teachers encourage them to share their voices? Do teachers value these voices, or do they fill the silence with their own, believing they know how the students feel and what they want to say?

The silence and acceptance of the statement in chalk addressing Asian female sexuality raises questions about what it means to be perceived and portrayed as the "model minority" in society. What does it mean to be a model for *others*? Tatum (1997) writes, "The myth of the model minority obscures the reality of racism in the lives of Asian Pacific Americans and encourages their silence about it" (p. 163). Asian Americans are perceived as a model minority because of the belief that they work hard and succeed. Additionally, they pose little threat to those in power because

they are perceived as remaining silent in the face of discrimination. Consequently, as Elisabeth expresses, stereotypes about Asians and Asian Americans abound in the US, leading in many cases to discrimination. Prasso (2005) observes that images of Asian men and women play a role in "creating a subconscious racism built on stereotypes" (p. xiii). And while the US has looked closely at representations of African Americans in film and the media, "we have not yet begun such scrutiny on behalf of Asians" (p. xiii).

Elisabeth's and Adriana's experiences illustrate the complexity of our emotions toward, and relationship with, our community. How can we at once be a part of, yet separate from, our community? With regard to the cultural identity of the Caribbean diaspora, Hall (1999) writes:

> Culture is production….It depends on a knowledge of tradition as 'the changing same'….But what this 'detour thought its pasts' does is to enable us, through culture, to produce ourselves anew, as new kinds of subjects….Paradoxically, our cultural identities, in any finished form, lie ahead of us. (p. 16)

We may physically or mentally leave our community, but has the culture of our community left us? Is our departure just another stage in the production of our community, contributing to the development of our own selves as cultural beings? Every community has its own culture, which we may find impossible to abandon completely, regardless of our emotions.

The relationship with our community becomes even more complex when we find that our community no longer wants us. How does this feel? Where do we go? What becomes of the internalized aspects of our community? Does our connection to our community disappear as soon as we walk out the door?

Shifting Tides: When Our Community Rejects Us

Communities generate a sense of belonging, but they can also create boundaries that separate and divide. Community members share something that unites them, but this unifying characteristic also tends to separate them from *others*. The notion of difference presents the possibility of boundaries, or limits, that place some people within and some people beyond a community. Communities can, therefore, be sites of exclusion as well as inclusion.

What happens when our community decides it does not want us anymore? Where do we go? What becomes of our sense of community? Adriana is a former religion teacher who taught at the Catholic school she attended as a child. She was fired from her job as a teacher for "having an unprofessional relationship with a parent" (Adriana). While she was in the hospital for a brief stay, a female parent came to visit her, as did many other parents. Shortly thereafter, she was let go by her employer. Interestingly, Adriana did not self-identify as a lesbian at the time. She had not yet had that internal conversation. Adriana was forced to leave the physical space of the Catholic school where she taught, but having been raised Catholic, she did not fully leave that community behind. At the gay pride parade, the teachings of the Church remain with her, a part of her thoughts, which she must interrogate as she attempts to get at the root of her moment of self-loathing.

Adriana subsequently seeks a new community, an open and welcoming school community, that embraces diversity.

> I only looked at schools after this that were going to be liberal, open-minded. I looked specifically for schools that had sexual orientation statements built into their diversity statement. And even though I didn't come out here until a year later, after I'd already been here, I knew that at

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least I could and wouldn't be branded or ex-communicated, burned at the stake. (Adriana)

In her new school community, faith does not have a direct place. Her identity is not something that is brought into question; however, the conflict between her faith and her existence remains with her. She cannot escape her upbringing, but she must find a way to negotiate it in a way that allows her to appreciate her new LGBT community. O'Donohue (1999) speaks to this longing to belong and the need to listen to our inner selves as we seek new communities:

> When the outer cultural shelters are in ruins, we need to explore and reawaken the depths of belonging in the human mind and soul; perhaps, the recognition of the depth of our hunger to belong may gradually assist us in awakening new and unexpected possibilities of community and friendship. (p. xxv)

Our places of belonging are not permanent, and when the external fractures, we must refocus on what our internal is telling us. What does our soul need and how can we nourish it? Where are the hidden possibilities for new relationships? For Adriana, a new teaching community emerges when she begins to listen to her inner guide, her need for a social justice community where fairness and equity prevail. By clarifying what she values utmost, Adriana is able to find a new place of belonging.

Traversing murky water: Living between multiple worlds.

Adriana straddles multiple communities. As a biracial individual, with a white father and a Latina mother, Adriana often seeks to connect with the Hispanic community, but with some difficulty. Adriana presents as white but identifies strongly with her Latina roots: "…culturally my roots are very much grounded in the Hispanic culture that I was brought up in…" (Adriana). This poses a problem at times

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when she enters the Latino/a community and the community does not automatically identify with her: "…I feel like I get the benefits of being Caucasian but then in some instances when I want to hang with the Hispanic crowd…they look at me funny and they're like…you Gringa, get out of here. So, that stings a little bit" (Adriana). Adriana shares that she feels guilty about the benefits she receives by looking white. But what are these benefits? White privilege refers to those privileges from which whites benefit solely based on the color of their skin, but which come unearned and are often invisible to them. Among these privileges are the possibilities of feeling good about oneself and of having voice, or the capacity to control public discourse. The ability to ignore the realities of privileged dominance is perhaps the greatest privilege (Howard, 1999).

White privilege is perpetuated when it is not addressed. McIntosh asks, "What will we do with such knowledge" (¶ 21) once we develop an awareness of our privilege? Adriana attempts to address her advantage, as well as the associated guilt, when she comments that she wants to advocate more for the Hispanic community. It is difficult, however, to advocate for a community that does not acknowledge you: "Where I get caught sometimes is with people saying 'don't speak for me,' and then I have to say, 'I'm speaking for me, too'" (Adriana). At times Adriana feels that being biracial is what prevents her from being accepted. She observes, "I'm not all Hispanic, so I don't count" (Adriana). Root (1990) explains this phenomenon:

> Because whites have been the oppressors in the United States, there is a mistrust by people of color of those accepted by or identified as white. Subsequently, those biracial individuals who are part white (and look white) will at times find it harder to gain acceptance by people of color by virtue of the attitudes and feelings that are projected onto

them because of their white heritage and the oppression it symbolizes
to people of color. (p. 188)

Adriana is once again caught in-between two communities, struggling for acceptance from the community with which she identifies. How do biracial individuals find their community? Are biracial individuals accepted by all of the communities that form their identity?

Moraga (1996), a biracial lesbian with a white father and a Latina mother, writes: "Regardless of how the dice were tossed and what series of accidents put our two parents—one white and one colored—together, we, their offspring, have had to choose who we are in racist Amerika" (p. 236). Moraga is light-skinned, which has at times provided "safe passage through the minefields of Amerikan racism" (p. 236). But in her heart she is a person of color:

If my thoughts could color my flesh, how dark I would turn…. I have
tasted assimilation and it is bitter on my tongue. I am that raging breed of
mixed-blood person who writes to defend a culture that I know is being
killed. (pp. 236-237)

For Moraga, there is a choice to be made. And the choice rests on the matter of loyalty: "I am loyal only to one. My mother culture, my mother land, my mother tongue, further back than even she can remember" (p. 236). People of mixed-backgrounds do not necessarily fit nicely within each of their racial groups.

Where, then, do our biracial students fit in our classrooms? Do we attempt to know and understand all of our students' racial identities, or only the ones that present themselves phenotypically? Do we prioritize their racial identities for them, or do we allow them to reveal how they identify? I return to this conversation shortly when I explore how society responds to inter-racial relationships.

Curtis also experiences feeling like an outsider from within his own community. As one of only six African Americans in his class at an elite, private, Christian high school for boys, Curtis recalls concern about him acting white. This pressure emanated from African American students at his school and at the neighboring private, Christian school for girls who made a conscious decision to associate with other African Americans at their school:

> There was that notion that you don't want to get caught acting white. Well, shit, if you go to St. James, I mean what, are you going to be "street" in the middle of Latin class? So, there was that constant nagging fear of not wanting to act white and yet your friends are white and what does all of this mean?…If you were a Black person who wasn't interacting, socializing mainly with other African Americans, then there is this looking back and forth like what's up with all this…I had one friend named Susan who…we had a very good relationship but…I remember her being worried that I was too white. Or maybe joking with me that "You better be careful Curtis," losing sight of who you are. (Curtis)

Does Curtis risk losing himself, his Black identity, by adopting what are believed to be white attitudes, behaviors, and communication styles? Is it problematic to act as the majority of Americans do? In summarizing the literature on acting white for professional success, Ogbu (2007) notes that "Black Americans in general see successful participation in White institutions as an assimilation, a one way acculturation or a subtractive process, that takes away their Black identity" (p. 368). Ogbu identifies several ways in which African Americans cope with what he terms the "burden of acting white:" some emulate whites, choosing to abandon Black culture and dialect in favor of white; others remain ambivalent noting that racism prevents Black success regardless of whether one adopts white frames of reference;

and still others resist or oppose assuming white frames of reference, since their "collective identity" requires them to talk like Black people.

Like Adriana, Curtis finds himself in two worlds. He is Black attending a predominantly white school, where doing well may be perceived as "acting white." Yet, as a smart student, Curtis wants to do well, which may involve taking on some of the characteristics of his school community. Can he exist in both worlds? Does being in one necessitate giving up the *other*? Can he move fluidly from the white culture of his school community to the Black culture in which he was raised?

Waves crashing: When communities collide.

Curtis later observes that the pressure from female friends about acting white affected his future relationships with African American females:

> I think it did make me more cautious in my relationships with Black females. That's not to say I didn't have any in college, but I think that that fear of criticism lingered well into college…I think it was less of a concern with males. In college I fell in with some other brothers pretty quickly…I think I felt it more because there's the whole dynamic of finding a mate and the whole idea that finding a mate outside of your race to some is some form of treason.

From where does this sense of treason come? Jones, an African American woman writes, "My mom always told me 'Don't you ever bring a white man home'" (Cnn.com). Would doing so mean denying one's own history of slavery and segregation?

While Black-white relationships seem to garner more attention than other inter-racial relationships in the United States, marrying outside of one's culture or ethnicity is a large concern for many parents. Is marrying outside of one's culture a step toward cultural suicide? As a child I distinctly recall my mother emphasizing that

I need to marry someone Jewish. Having been raised in a secular household, I did not

understand what this meant. Why limit love to a certain group of people? Now,

having a stronger sense of my Jewish identity, I understand her concerns about

preserving the culture and traditions, not to mention the numbers, of a group of

people. Is her desire wrong? Are people prejudiced for wanting to maintain their

heritage?

How are children shaped by inter-racial and inter-cultural relationships? Does

one racial or cultural identity have priority in the home? Willie (1996) explains her

multiracial identity as a conscious choice.

> While I affirm that piece of myself and my heritage that has been devalued
> and degraded as well as the foremothers and forefathers who persevered
> and triumphed, I also acknowledge and celebrate the heritage of the
> European American foremothers and forefathers who persevered and
> triumphed in sometimes similar and sometimes different ways. And I
> celebrate the particularity of my explicitly multiracial experience. (p. 278)

Moraga and Willie express very different ways of claiming who they are. We must be

prepared for such differences, and many more, in our classroom. We must also be

mindful of the challenges society creates for children of mixed marriages.

Tatum (1997) discusses some the challenges associated with biracial identity:

> One such challenge is embodied in the frequently asked question,
> "What are you?" While the question may be prompted by the
> individual's sometimes racially ambiguous appearance, the insistence
> with which the question is often asked represents society's need to
> classify its members racially. The existence of the biracial person
> challenges the rigid boundaries between Black and White, and the
> questioner may really be asking, "Which side are you on? Where do
> you stand?" (p. 175)

Root (1990) comments that questions like "Where are you from?" can heighten a

young child's feeling of *otherness*. At first this *otherness* may seem like special

attention, but when coupled with inquisitive looks, long passing glances to identify

unfamiliar features, the special attention becomes negative attention.

> It is with these reactions that the child in her or his dichotomous way
> of knowing and sorting the world may label her or his otherness as
> bad. The child's egocentrism can result in assuming blame or
> responsibility for having done something wrong related to their
> color…(p. 189)

How do mixed marriages influence the creation of a sense of community in the

classroom? Must our students choose a side in our classroom? How can educators

help students with parents of different races, cultures, ethnicities, or religions develop

a strong sense of self in a society that has mixed emotions about such unions? Root

(1990) observes, "Because of their ambiguous ethnic identity and society's refusal to

view the races as equal, mixed race people begin life as *marginal people*" (p. 185).

We cannot leave society at the door when students enter our classroom. How, then,

do we eliminate this marginality in the interest of equality?

Teachers must remain hyper-aware of their assumptions about students'

performance and behavior, as tied to their background. Regarding the bi-racial child,

Root (1990) writes:

> A teacher's oppressive assumptions and projections can also contribute
> to the marginality of the biracial child. This child may be singled out
> in ways that set her or him apart from peers. Unrealistic expectations
> of the child may be assumed, and misperceptions of the child's
> environment perpetuated. For example, in assuming that the child
> identifies with a culture unfamiliar to the teacher, she or he may be
> asked to "teach" the class about their racial/cultural group (while other
> children are not asked to do the same). By her or his action, the teacher
> is likely to project stereotypes on to the child with which they may not
> identify. (p. 190)

Daniel's childhood experience telling his classmates about Jewish culture and traditions gives life to Root's analysis. As one of just a few Jewish students, Daniel recalls being asked to explain Judaism.

> Inevitably you're going to have teachers in elementary school that are like, "Oh, you're Jewish. Well you could come in and do a Jewish day." Oh, good, put me up in front of everybody because I'm 9 and I am a tremendous orator and I will lead the class in Jew day….I would love to see a 3rd grade teacher bring student "B" up in front of the class and say, "Explain Christmas to everyone." "I get presents." "No, but the meaning of the religion and the holidays and why your culture celebrates them" because that's what they wanted us to do. I mean it was crazy. Now fortunately… I have a tremendously wonderful mom…and I remember in elementary school mom coming in and explaining "these are things we do," while I was like her assistant, but I didn't have to stand up there.…I think it was a way of [the teacher] saying, not only are we going to include you, but we're going to highlight you. (Daniel)

Daniel's mom, a teacher, understands that he cannot and should not do what the teacher has asked of him and she comes to his aid. But what about children whose parents do not have this capacity? Are they doomed to always be highlighted, made to stand out in the classroom as different? Difference should be appreciated and affirmed in the classroom, but when this difference is defined by the teacher's assumptions, the educational approach becomes problematic.

Our closeness to our community gives insight into the second theme that emerged from conversations with my participants. Whether part of our community or not, the closer our relationship to the person we *other* or who *others* us seems to shape the pain we feel as well as our response to that pain.

The Closer We Are, the Harder we Fall

Whether as *other* or *otherer*, the incidents that seem most memorable for my participants are those that involve people who are close to them. Our proximity to the

other seems to shape the pain we feel as a result of difficult interactions. Van Manen

(1997) describes relationality as the "lived relation we maintain with others in the

interpersonal space that we share with them" (p. 104). But what happens when the

people with whom we share the most intimate space, our family, reject who we are?

Can we recover from the pain that results from such rejection?

You Can Choose Your Friends but You Can't Choose Your Family

My Technicolor Coat

Ever wonder what you're really doing to me?
Ever think that maybe you're too blind to see
the scars on my heart, the slits on my wrist
or the daggers you throw so casually?
I know that hell is already calling my name
and that my Technicolor coat is full of shame.
But, the words still hurt, the eyes still lie
You look for difference; I look for the same.
(Adriana)

Adriana wrote the above poem two months after coming out to her family last

year. Initially, her family made it clear that she should have stayed in the closet. After

a year, her sister and her father came to accept her. But her mother remains in denial,

and this creates unbearable pain for Adriana.

> She may never give in and that one hurts to the core because it
> reinforces that in order to be loved and accepted by my mother, I must
> meet a certain set of conditions and clearly they are not my own. It is
> clear to me that while my mother may want to love me "as is," she
> can't. Unfortunately, I can't be anyone other than me. Some days, I
> don't know whether it's better for me to hope that she will come
> around or to give up on that dream and come to grips that I can only be
> an arm's length away from the person whose arms I most want around
> me. (Adriana)

Green (1996) expresses a sentiment similar to Adriana's when he writes, "I am a

young gay Black male who is painfully aware that sometimes home—that space that

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is so nurturing and loving—can be one of the loneliest places to exist, especially in the closet" (p. 261). He recalls his mother's words when he was ten years old, words that left him locked behind a door, rejecting his true self for many years: "Faggots are a disgrace…It's just not normal" (p. 258). If we can't choose our family, how do we learn to live with them when they reject that which is core to our being? Is love, in fact, unconditional? How can one aspect of our identity seemingly erase all others?

For Adriana, the fact that she is a lesbian has placed in the shadows all other defining elements of who she is.

> I was talking to someone once and I said, "You know, I know that at the very core my mom, and to some degree my dad and my family, hates me for no other reason than for who I am." I can walk old ladies across the street. I'm the person who puts the grocery cart back when I'm done with my groceries. I'm that person, but it does not matter. At the very core this is who I am and they hate it. And yet, I still have to sit down…I don't have to but I choose to because I love them…have breakfast, sit across the table with them and engage over a piece of me that as far as they're concerned is a non-entity. So, trying to figure out how to do that, or just even sit across the room from someone who has said, "I hate this, this is something I do not tolerate" and vice versa, how do they do it? …as much hatred as there is…there's also got to be a tremendous amount of love. I'm convinced the only way that that is possible, that sitting across from each other is possible, is through denial….If the people who are closest to me have this perception, how can I straddle keeping them in my life while completely rejecting what they say? (Adriana)

Adriana remains stuck in the in-between, straddling the inconsistencies in her life. She tolerates being with her family because she loves them, and she wants them to love her. Adriana believes they do the same because they love her, because she is family. She lives and breathes the tension about which Aoki (2005c) speaks when describing this interspace: "In my case, [it is] the space that is neither Japan nor Canada, neither Japanese nor English, but that interspace where the otherness of

others cannot be buried…" (p. 308). Adriana cannot define herself by one community or the *other*; she is, in fact, an amalgamation of the two, residing in a third space that has yet to be understood or supported by her family.

O'Donohue (1999) writes:

> The hunger to belong is at the heart of our nature. Cut off from others, we atrophy and turn in on ourselves. The sense of belonging is the natural balance of our lives…There is some innocent childlike side to the human heart that is always deeply hurt when we are excluded. Belonging suggests warmth, understanding, and embrace. (pp. xxi-xxii)

Denied her family's understanding, Adriana longs to be seen as the person she has always been, for her being remains the same. She longs for the safety and comfort of what was once a welcoming home. She longs for her mother's unconditional embrace, which it seems she may never again enjoy. But her need for belonging exceeds her need for the warmth of home. In describing belonging, O'Donohue writes that everyone "dreams of a nest of belonging in which one is embraced, seen, and loved" (p. xxiii). Adriana seeks to be seen for who she truly is, not for the set of stereotypes and myths that are applied to her. To be seen is to be heard and understood fully and authentically from our own voice. To be seen is to be removed from our isolation. To be seen is also to be drawn forward from our inner turmoil. "The sense of belonging also shelters us from the inner infinity which each of us secretly carries. There is a huge abyss within every mind. When we belong, we have an outside mooring to prevent us from falling into ourselves" (O'Donohue, 1999. p. xxiii). Belonging provides an anchor in rough water, letting us know it is okay to be who we are, regardless of how we identify, and keeping us afloat amidst our own confusion.

When Adriana's aunt and uncle refuse to allow her partner to attend a party in her honor for having recently published a book, Adriana begrudgingly goes to the party alone, in part to show how hurt she is. But she remains troubled by the deeper meaning of her aunt's actions, an individual she views as "a beacon of social justice."

> I was like, this is me…I think that's what bothered me the most, this is your own blood and if you can do it to me then you're going to do it to anyone on the street. That's what I think bothered me, it doesn't matter that it's me, it doesn't matter that I came and visited you when you had a stroke in the hospital, it doesn't matter that I watered your plants while you were away.…I might as well be a complete and utter stranger. I am no different to you right now than the next person on the street. And that's what was so disturbing. Over this one thing that you don't know anything about. And for as much as you preach education and as much as you preach learning.…And all you had to do was just say "hello." …It was just "hello." (Adriana)

How does the social justice tune we sing sound different when an issue strikes us at home, when our daughters tell us they are lesbians, when our sons decide to marry outside of their race?

Adriana feels disappointed by her family's attitude toward her identity. Similarly, she feels disappointed by the headmaster who fired her from her teaching position at a Catholic school. Adriana's emotion stems from the fact that she had known the headmaster since the 4th grade. In having a relationship with the headmaster, Adriana expects to be treated differently than she might be by a stranger. She expects her family and the headmaster to know who she is, to believe that she is a good person, and that her character is in fact far more important and interesting than the fact that she is a lesbian.

If we all have multiple identities, how is it that people are able to reduce us to one part of who we are, "this one thing?" Identity, comes from the late Latin

identitatem, meaning "sameness." Sameness may be what unifies those who adhere to the communal culture of a community, but surely all who belong to a given community are not the *same*. My experience has shown me that my Jewish identity is very unique. My identity is what makes me a singular being in this world. The union of my Lithuanian-born maternal grandmother, whose family perished in the Holocaust, and my Minsk-born maternal grandfather, whose own grandfather was an Orthodox Rabbi determined to assimilate when he fled the anti-Semitism of Russia for the safety of the United States, led to my secular upbringing. As a young child with two Jewish parents, I remember having difficulty explaining to friends that I "celebrated" Christmas. "Well," I would say, "we don't really celebrate Christmas. We have a Christmas tree and we get presents. It's an American holiday for us." I was at once the same and different. Can identity truly mean sameness? And if we look at identities as markers of sameness, are we missing the uniqueness that lies beneath the labels placed upon us?

When I think of Adriana's pain, I wonder: if other forms of difference are accepted by our family and those close to us, why does sexual identity present such an overwhelming obstacle? As a successful student and athlete, receiving much praise from aunts, uncles, and grandparents, Green (1996), a gay, Black male, asks, "Why, then, if I am so worth praising, does one aspect of my identity outweigh all of the positive attributes that I contribute to our community?" (p. 259). Where are the spaces where we can commune with those who are similar to us but also different?

In *Gay Adolescents in Catholic Schools: Avoiding the Topic Won't Make it Go Away,* Mattingly (2004) corrects several misunderstandings about Catholic teachings

on homosexuality. He notes that the church "accepts the person without question" (p. 44) and condemns "malice in speech or action toward homosexuals" (Mattingly, as cited in CDF, Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons). Further, "The Cathechism of the Catholic Church" states homosexuality "should be accepted with respect, care, and sensitivity" (Mattingly, as cited in CCC, 1994). Mattingly argues that gay teens need to feel loved and accepted for who they are by family, friends, church, and school. Addressing the harassment of gay students in school is key to developing self-worth.

> Self-destructive behaviors are not intrinsic to being homosexual but
> they flow from the external negative reaction to it, which then
> becomes internalized. To the extent that isolation and hateful messages
> decrease, there is a movement from self-destruction to self-integration.
> (p. 42)

If the Church advocates love and acceptance, then why does Adriana experience so much pain from those who speak for her Church: her headmaster and her family?

Adriana's experiences with those close to her illustrate the pervasiveness of heterosexism, which Blumenfeld (2000) defines as "the institutionalization of a heterosexual norm or standard, which establishes and perpetuates the notion that all people are or should be heterosexual, thereby privileging heterosexuals and heterosexuality, and excluding the needs, concerns, cultures, and life experiences of LGBT people" (p. 262). As previously stated, "The church accepts the person without question" (Mattingly, 2004). However, the church does not accept sexual activity among two people of the same gender. Adriana's family has slowly come to accept her identity, but her partner, with whom she is involved in an intimate relationship, they cannot accept. Adriana's mother tells her: "I accept you. I just don't accept your

relationship" (Adriana). Her conversations often go well until her partner's name is mentioned.

> She'll say, "So, what are you doing" even if I say "I'm gonna go to the mall." Then she'll say "Who are you going with, what are you going to do?" and then I'll tell her and she acts disappointed, like she doesn't know what the answer's going to be. What are you hoping for? I met prince charming today mom and that's who I'm going with and he's picking me up on his white horse and then we're gonna go to the palace…I think she's just having visions of no wedding. (Adriana)

Heterosexism is the practice of seeing the world as a place for heterosexuals. When we expect our sons and daughters to grow up and have weddings with people of the opposite gender (our society only identifies two genders, while some cultures identify more), we engage in heterosexist thinking. Such expectations limit the possibilities of our children and create disappointment when those expectations are not met. When our LGBT children become aware of these expectations, they feel as though they cannot share who they are. "The biggest fear of high-school-aged gay adolescents is family rejection. Adolescents who do come out within their family experience an increase in self-esteem" (Mattingly, 2004, p. 45). Mattingly further writes that in Catholic families parental acceptance occurs once the family's myths about homosexuality have been debunked. Self-worth is, therefore, linked to acceptance.

Self-esteem, acceptance, and familial love—these are the elements that contribute to a healthy sexual identity. As Adriana notes, coming out to her family was difficult, but she perseveres in the hope that they will affirm who she is. The value of these relationships leads her to address the *othering* she faces in the hope of making a breakthrough toward understanding.

When Proximity Compels Us to Address our Othered Status

Our relationship with the one who *others* can be painful, but it can also be a source of strength. In trusting the person who *others* us and in assuming good will, we find ourselves able to address our pain openly and in a productive manner. Doing so can result in deepening the level of understanding in the relationship. Curtis finds himself offended by his boss' reference to him as "boy." Though Curtis acknowledges that he has a tendency to dismiss comments that might offend other African Americans, he decides to confront his boss because they have a strong relationship and he believes she has good intentions.

> …as she became comfortable with me and as part of…our relationship, she sometimes would use the word "boy." And, maybe she would say "you go, boy" or "boy, that was a good lesson" and it was always in my mind an attempt to, like a term of affection, or an attempt to in her mind speak at me in a language that I understood…And this was a gay woman who was definitely on the progressive end of the scale. And I remember thinking I'm gonna have to say something because I really know she means well and she's not trying to denigrate me but every time I hear that word "boy" even for me, I know that that just can't happen. And so even though I knew she was just trying to use a term of affection, I was like, I told her, I said "Sarah, I know that you don't mean anything by it, but I feel uncomfortable when you use the word 'boy.' (Curtis)

For Curtis, the relationship could only improve by sharing his concerns. I recently found myself in a similar situation. During the beginning of a movie, a friend said out of nowhere, "Jews control Hollywood," as the Metro Goldwyn Meyer insignia with the roaring lion appeared on the screen. On many occasions I choose not to address the offensive remarks that friends make. How I respond depends on the nature of my relationship, how open-minded I perceive the *otherer* to be, the amount of time available to address the situation, and additional factors. In this particular situation, I believed that I

could have a conversation with my friend about why the statement offended me. My effort was not to change his mind necessarily, but to communicate to him the implications of the word "control" when used with Jews. I wanted him to understand my context. My purpose was to deepen our relationship by sharing part of who I am, what is important to me, and what my identity means.

Daniel relates a time that illuminates the challenges posed when *othering* occurs in situations where a sound relationship does not exist.

> My brother is a special ed teacher also and in one of his classes he has a teacher assistant. And she is in her 60's, Korean. I'm just adding that because it's an interesting part of the subplot. And in class when they were introducing themselves…it came up that he was Jewish…and his teaching assistant said to the kids, "Oh, Jewish people are very rich." What do you even say? He doesn't know her, they aren't friends, this wasn't a joke. This was "Kids, just so you know, write this down." He had no prior relationship with her. He'd known her for two days. He's at a new building. He's a new teacher in the building. What do you do? "Ok, kids, stop. Lady, listen…" Do you just break it down for her? I don't know how I would handle that at all. (Daniel)

Our proximity, the significance of our relationship with the *other*, can compel us to respond. Likewise when that relationship does not exist, we may remain silent. But what happens when we remain silent? What stereotypes and systems of oppression are reinforced by not addressing *othering* when it occurs? If significant relationships are a key part of the process in commenting on *othering*, thereby creating a level of understanding which ideally will stop the *othering* from happening, how do we create such relationships among our students?

When our Othering *Damages Close Relationships*

What happens when we hurt those close to us? What do we learn from these encounters and from the pain we cause the people about whom we care? While I

cannot speak to the emotions and feelings of Adriana's mother or her headmaster, as they are not participants in my study, I can learn from the experiences of Daniel and Claudia who share times when they fear they have permanently harmed their relationships with individuals close to them because of their *othering*.

Daniel shares that his sister first explained to him how offensive the use of the phrase "that's gay" is. In college, his sister had a lot of friends who were lesbians and she would yell at Daniel when he would say, "That's gay."

> The term "that's gay" used to be in my vocabulary constantly as a teenager and my sister used to…yell at us and I was like, "Ok, I'll never say it again"…she had friends that were gay, so it bothered her. We were like, we're not talking about gay, we're saying it's dumb. (Daniel)

"That's gay" seems to be as pervasive in school hallways and classrooms as "hello." How damaging is this phrase? Do names really hurt? What's in a name?

I was named by my parents at birth. My name is in many ways representative of my identity. Alison identifies me as female and Milofsky, for those who know the "-sky" ending, identifies me as a Russian Jew. My middle name, Laurie, is my maternal grandmother's maiden name, thus tying me to my Lithuanian family who was killed in the Holocaust. My name is sacred to me. It is my connection to my family and to my heritage. And it now ties me to my children, as my daughter has my middle name and both children have my last name, linking them to my history and that of my ancestors.

What does it mean "to name" someone or something in a negative way? To name-call or use a label to name someone, such as "fag," "dyke," or "nigger," essentially strips individuals of their identity, of their uniqueness in the world. Such names remove the individuals' stories, dehumanizing them, therefore making them

easier targets of hate. Buscaglia (1982) shares his experience with name calling when

he moved to Los Angeles from Italy as a young child:

> I was called a "dago" and a "wop." You know, kids would say, "Get away, you smelly wop." I remember going to my father and saying, "Papa, what's a wop? What's a dago?" He said, "Never mind, Felice. Don't let it bother you. People have names. They call you names but it doesn't mean anything." But it *did* bother me because it was a distancing phenomena and they never learned anything about me by calling me "wop" and "dago." They didn't know for instance, that Mama was an opera singer in the old country and that Papa was a waiter. (p. 24)

By not learning about him, Felice remains an object, easily mocked because he does

not have person status. If his peers knew about him and knew his story, would they be

able to call him names so easily, so carelessly?

While Daniel listens to his sister, he does not truly understand the impact of

his use of the phrase "that's gay" until he uses it with a friend whose brother is gay.

> A friend of mine who I worked with has a brother who's gay…we're still friends and we taught together at the alternative ed school. Every now and then I would say "This is gay." And I remember saying in front of Steve one time that something was gay, or I called him a fag or something. And I'm thinking to myself "Oh, man." He and I are the same age. We're the same demographic entirely other than religion. Did I just totally offend him because his brother…he's openly gay…He's a really good guy and I've met him and I've just said something to Steve…and I'm really wondering in my head is this going to affect our relationship because I just said that…I'm trying to think if I've slipped up [since then] and I don't think I have. I'm sure it wasn't conscious, like "I'm never going to say those words again" but I was so mortified and [I thought] did I just ruin a friendship by saying that? (Daniel)

Realizing that he may have permanently damaged his friendship with Steve, Daniel

subconsciously makes the decision not to use the phrase again. The proximity to the

other personalizes the derogatory language he uses and brings it from the

inconsequential to the consequential. By acknowledging, whether conscious or

subconscious, the potential impact of his actions, Daniel moves from being a perpetrator to an ally, addressing the use of the phrase "that's gay" with his students whenever he hears it.

Claudia similarly worries about how her bias has affected her relationship with Susan, a friend with whom she teaches who is younger than her.

> …we're good friends and I really like her, but sometimes…I've listened to some of her stories and it just reminded me of a younger time and a less mature time and…I wonder if sometimes I've thought less of her opinion at times when I shouldn't have…[I wonder if] it affects my overall respect for her professionalism.
>
> I think there are a couple of instances where I've done that [dismissed her]…And I know that she's sensitive about her age…And I think she feels with the parents she has to kind of prove herself. So, in small, hopefully not too harmful ways, I've contributed to that. I haven't contributed to the way the parents feel about her, but I have sensed that lack of maturity and maybe dismissed some of the things she's said because of that, or not taken them as seriously. (Claudia)

Like Daniel, Claudia reflects on the potential impact of her thoughts and behaviors and the need to be more mindful of what she says and/or does with regard to Susan. At one point during our conversation, Claudia leans into the tape recorder and says, "Sorry Susan. I love you," acknowledging that she has hurt her friend and that she feels bad about this.

Why do we *other* those who are close to us? Is our *othering* a part of human nature? Is it so much a part of how we see the world, that we cannot prevent it from happening? Daniel and Claudia illustrate, through their thoughts and actions, that we can learn from reflecting on our *othering*. How do we move from caring about the pain we cause those close to us to caring about the pain we cause people we do not know? Why is it that distance makes it so easy to *other*?

***When Distance Allows us to* Other**

If our proximity to the person we *other* or who *others* us causes great pain,

then the inverse holds true as well, in the stories of my participants. Adriana and

Elisabeth *other* those with whom they have no relationship and feel no guilt in doing

so. What do such actions tell us about the need for human interaction and relationship

building?

Adriana shares that her two big hot buttons are homophobia and classism. She

feels a great disdain for those with abundant wealth. And she turns to her experiences

as a child to pinpoint why she feels the need to advocate for those with less money.

> Having grown up and having spent my summers in Nicaragua, I was
> always exposed to poverty. And my great grandfather was a
> doctor…and used to dole out basically medical care for free in villages
> and I remember being like 6 or 7 years old and him saying to me just
> before he died, "Always remember to be fair…" My great
> grandparents used to convert their house into basically a soup kitchen
> on the weekends and feed…It's not the kind of… "Well, here's a
> $20.00 and aren't I great?" It's a real, let me get to know you, how are
> you doing, let's hang out. (Adriana)

Adriana's experiences as a child surrounded by poverty have led her to have a

great contempt for the rich.

> Then there's this whole class thing that I have. I have this thing against
> Lexus vehicles. It's mostly Lexus. Every time I see a Lexus it makes
> me burn. This is like real prejudice. This is something I actually did.
> It's kind of bad but in the end probably not so bad. In the Middleton
> parking lot, the one that's by the farmer's market…this was like at
> night…there was a parking ticket on a Lexus and I was like,
> "Hmm…if the guy never gets the parking ticket…" I'm like, poor
> Lexus. So, I took the parking ticket off the Lexus and I'm like "damn
> Lexus" so I took it off, and I was like "he can afford it…" So, I took it
> off a Lexus and I'm like, I don't care what happens. I don't even know
> who that is. (Adriana)

When pressed about how she felt afterwards, Adriana does not express any remorse.

In fact, she feels quite the opposite: "I actually felt really good about it. I was like, it's

sticking it to the man. I didn't care. But I'm assuming the owner of the Lexus is

wealthy, can afford it…I'll feel bad if they're struggling to make car payments."

Adriana describes class and entitlement issues with regard to Lexus owners. But is it

possible that Adriana and the Lexus owner whom she targets are not so different after

all? She acknowledges that in not knowing the owner, she may be targeting someone

who does not have the financial means that she assumes they have. In not knowing, or

even seeing, the target of our prejudice and discrimination, is it easier for us to create

a justification for our actions, to forget about the possible proximity between the

other and ourselves?

Elisabeth feels justified in her bias against new, white Teach for America

(TFA) teachers who come to her school.

> This is hard for me to say, but I'm going to say it. I think I have
> discrimination against TFA white teachers because I assume certain
> things about them. I assume they like fit the yuppie "I'm here to do my
> two year teaching thing and then I'm leaving"… I'm like number 1.
> I'm also a TFA alum and I feel like the people after leaving after two
> years are dragging my name and my organization down the drain.
> Number 2. I think that I get, I don't know what the word is, but it's
> like it really sets me off when people have privilege and aren't aware
> of their privileges and I see that in the workplace especially with the
> new [white] TFA's…I think the whiteness has to do with part of it.
> They come to school and they assume that the person teaching 20
> years doesn't know anything and hasn't done anything and he's doing
> the wrong thing and they're going to come in with all new ideas and
> change the world. (Elisabeth)

In reflecting on how she feels about having this bias, she observes, "…when I think

of it I feel justified in the way that I feel." Without knowing the new TFA's, Elisabeth

feels justified in judging them based on the assumptions she has about how they will act.

Justice comes from the Latin *justitia* meaning "righteousness, equity." How do we then feel justified when doing things that do not reinforce equity, things that in fact further divide people? "To do justice to someone or something" means to treat or present someone or something fairly and accurately. But what happens when we have different understandings of what is fair and accurate? Is it fair for Adriana to take the parking ticket off the Lexus? Is it accurate to assume that white TFA's come in to a school not knowing what their privilege means, or that they will want to change what older teachers do in the classroom? Justice, from the old French, dating back to 1140, means "the exercise of authority in vindication of right by assigning reward or punishment." But who determines what is right? What gives individuals the power to assume the authority to assign reward or punishment, when such decisions are based on biases?

Adriana and Elisabeth both have provided examples as *otherer* from positions of less power than their targets. Adriana's action is on behalf of the have-nots. Elisabeth's prejudice is as a person of color responding to white privilege. Do we feel more justified in our *othering* when it comes from a position of less social power? Quiroga (2000) describes this phenomenon when describing the attitude of a fictional gay male: "He believes that the victimization he suffers from the society at large justifies his rendering others to the realm of the invisible" (p. 205). How can we shift such thinking? What possible productive messages could emerge from our pain, allowing us to feel the humaness of the *other*? When Levinas commands us to be

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mindful of a moral imperative and to acknowledge the humaness of the *other*, he does not speak only to those belonging to dominant groups. He speaks to all individuals, regardless of their identity.

Vindication, from *vindicare*, means "to set free, lay claim to, assert, avenge." What do we hope to avenge by *othering* those with greater power? Is this an attempt to set ourselves free, to release us from our dominated status? Can we be liberated by causing pain to *others,* even if the *other* is from a dominant group? How do we further destroy our soul in attempting to do so? And is it possible to vindicate someone else through our actions? Adriana attempts to look out for the "have nots" in society, but whom can she set free through her actions? Can she vindicate the lives of people she does not know by targeting someone else she does not know, someone who will never be aware of her intentions? In taking on the role of protector, who is being protected? Does the gap between the haves and have-nots lessen or become wider through such vigilante justice, such misplaced protection?

Is such *othering* out of a desire to assert or lay claim to power? What kind of power can we attain when we oppress an*other*? Is one form of oppression worse than an*other*? Do we become blind to our own forms of oppression in the belief that the underlying message validates our prejudice, in the belief that *their* prejudice is worse than *ours*? Such thinking takes us down the dangerous path of competing oppressions in which we seek to prove that our suffering is worse than an*other's*. But such thinking does not advance society toward understanding or toward equity. We cannot compare pain, for each experience is unique, and to attempt to do so devalues the

singularity of our experience, taking us further and further away from an empathic, caring stance.

In the struggle to defend the oppressed, Freire (1970/2000) warns against entering the struggle as objects and emerging as subjects. To do so is to repeat the cycle of oppression that the oppressed have themselves experienced. Hooks (1990) responds by asking:

> How do we create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also oppposes dehumanization but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualization? (p. 15)

The capacity to participate in "creative, expansive self-actualization" is what keeps us looking inward in our struggle against oppression, as a way to prevent us from becoming subjects in the oppression of *others*. Hooks claims that opposition alone is not enough; we must engage in a proces of re-making ourselves.

Elisabeth and Adriana bring their own biases to their interactions with the *other*. Their prior experiences shape their interactions. In the next section, my participants share additional encounters around bias in which their own baggage has played a significant role.

Sink or Swim: The Weight of Our Own Baggage

In *The Things They Carried,* Tim O'Brien (1990) describes the innumerable objects American soldiers in Vietnam carried with them. He writes:

> To carry something was to hump it, as when Lieutenant Jimmy Cross humped his love for Martha up the hills and through the swamps. In its intransitive form, to hump meant to walk, or to march, but it implied burdens far beyond the intransitive….They carried all they could bear, and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible power of the things they carried. (pp. 3-4, 7)

The objects they carried were far heavier than their actual weight. They carried memories of home, of people they loved. Like the objects on the soldiers' backs, we carry our experiences with us wherever we go. As if in an identity backpack, we keep them packed up and take them with us whether we travel near or far. At times these experiences weigh heavily, filling us with fear and worry. Given that our prior experiences remain with us, how do they shape our interpretation of interactions around *othering*? When someone says something to us, do we automatically assume that it is based on our race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, or other aspect of our identity? Is there gray area in these interactions, a space where we need to reflect on what our experiences have led us to believe? And does a person's intent matter when the impact is the sting of feeling *othered*? A few of my participants share experiences where they felt *othered* and questioned the validity of their interpretation. Their experiences raise the idea that what we bring to a situation can affect the outcome.

Intent Versus Impact: Misunderstandings or **Othering**?

Elisabeth describes standing out as an Asian American woman in her neighborhood, which is predominantly African American. And in addition to race, she perceives that her class is at times an issue.

> …being a non-Black person in the neighborhood I'm seen as part of the gentrifying force of the neighborhood…It's just like you kind of sense it when you're walking down the street. Some people are friendly and some people are just not friendly and you're like I don't know if you're not friendly towards me because you're just not friendly in general or because… (Elisabeth)

When strangers interact with us, do we always know their intentions? Do our assumptions about their behavior worsen what may have been an interaction devoid of implications around identity?

Claudia shares an experience around her gender and class, which leaves her offended, but questioning whether she truly was *othered* for her identity? When driving a beat up car, Claudia seems to be treated differently on the road. In one instance at a gas station, a hired driver blocked her in, leading to an unfortunate encounter.

> I went over and asked the taxi driver if he could move so I could get out… he was like "Oh, yes, absolutely" but the person who was in the taxi got out and just started railing into me, screaming at me about how rude I was and he actually said to me, with my daughter within earshot, he said "I hope you get laid soon." And I couldn't believe he had said that to me. I mean I can't help but connect…I don't know, it seemed like it was because I was in this trashy car that he would even dream of yelling at me. … I don't know if that had to do with it, or if that was somebody who was really grumpy. It was a nice fancy limo taxi and…It just seemed like he had permission to treat me in a crappy way because I was driving this yucky car. I don't know. (Claudia)

Claudia acknowledges that she does not, in fact, know why the man responded to her the way he did. She assumes it is because of her car and questions how he would have responded had she been in a Mercedes. She also questions the role gender played in the interaction, "I mean, to use a sexual term like that. Would you say that to a man?" (Claudia). Claudia's prior experiences as a gendered individual led her to draw certain conclusions. These experiences, combined with the messages she has received throughout her life regarding male and female roles and modes of communication form the lenses through which she sees the world. Hill Collins (2000) writes:

> We must acknowledge that our differing experiences with oppression create problems in the relationships among us. Each of us lives within a

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system that vests us with varying levels of power and privilege. These differences in power, whether structured along axes of race, class, gender, age, or sexual orientation, frame our relationships. (p. 457)

Claudia's interaction is framed both by her prior experience and the system of oppression that positions men as dominant in society.

We do not know the man's true intentions. His words may have been completely colored by his own lenses, which position him as superior with regard to women. He may or may not have been aware of this when he spoke. Hill Collins (2000) characterizes the ways in which dominant groups form relationships with subordinate groups as voyeuristic:

From the perspective of the privileged, the lives of people of color, of the poor, and of women are interesting for their entertainment value. The privileged become voyeurs, passive onlookers who do not relate to the less powerful, but who are interested in seeing how the "different" live. (p. 458)

While we each have our own unique lenses shaping how we see the world, Hill Collins establishes that there are marked differences separating the ways dominant groups and subordinate groups engage in human interaction. But are perspective and intention the same? And how do either of these notions relate to impact? Regardless of the lenses framing how the man in Claudia's situation viewed her, and regardless of his intention, Claudia is left feeling less than, unequal.

It was just like a feeling in your gut like, "Who does he think he is?" I remember thinking, "Does he think he's better than I am, that he can talk to me that way in front of my children?" It made me feel like he thought that I was not as good a person, or his equal. It made me feel like I wasn't his equal. (Claudia)

Do intentions matter when the impact is so great? Should the *otherer* assume responsibility for the impact of his or her words/actions even when the intention was

not to harm? What happens when intentions and impact do not match? And how can remaining mindful of our own baggage keep us above the water's surface when its weight threatens to pull us under?

We cannot assume responsibility for the *otherer's* actions, but we can claim our own. If we wish to dismantle the systems of oppression that maintain dominant and subordinate statuses, subordinate groups must begin to address the judgments they make and the conclusions they draw. Hill Collins (2000) notes:

> Members of subordinate groups are understandably reluctant to abandon a basic mistrust of members of powerful groups because this basic mistrust has traditionally been central to their survival….Like the privileged, members of subordinate groups must also work toward replacing judgments by category with new ways of thinking and acting. (p. 462)

By understanding the lenses that color our own sight and attempting to remove the smudges, we can engage with the subordinate or dominant *other* in ways that can lead to social change. In the words of Audre Lorde (2003), we must all examine our position: "I urge you to tackle what is most difficult for us all, self-scrutiny of our complacencies, the idea that since each of us believes she is on the side of right, she need not examine her position" (p. 259).

When misinformation prevails.

At times we face prejudice that is based on ignorance, simply not knowing or not being aware of the facts. When misinformation is prevalent, people may view our identity in ways that are far removed from how we see ourselves. Adriana shares experiences at her current school around her identity as a lesbian. Adriana waited a year before coming out at her school. Given what had happened at her previous school, she decided to establish herself as a professional first, and she wanted to wait

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until she was in a secure relationship. Adriana feels there is a different set of rules for

a single gay person versus an attached gay person. She gives the following example:

> I had someone at the school say to me, before they knew that I was
> attached, but they new that I was gay, "Are you sure you want to coach
> the girls?" I coach the 7/8 basketball team. "Is that safe for you?" To
> imply that what, I'm going to go out and molest a bunch of 7th and 8th
> grade girls? (Adriana)

The person making the remarks has conflated same sex attraction and pedophilia. In a

similar experience, while on an outdoor education trip, Adriana says she feels she has

to be extra cautious that no one sees her change clothes because of a teacher's

comments:

> I also had another teacher say to me, "Do the kids know about your
> sexuality?" and the way it was implied was a) "You don't want to let
> them know about your sexuality," but b) "If they see you change, they
> might go home and tell your parents that something happened."
> (Adriana)

Much of Adriana's insights into the teachers' remarks are inferred, but regardless of

the teachers' specific intent, their statements are ripe with the suggestion of

misinformation. It is very possible that their intention was to protect Adriana from

possible harm, but the impact was to distance her and make her feel isolated,

reinforcing the stereotypes she perceives about what it means to be a lesbian.

> Adriana describes her surprise at such ignorant comments.

> …at first I was really taken aback and I didn't really know what to say.
> And at that point I hadn't come out to the students. Because even
> though this is a really, really liberal place, there's a handful of
> conservatives who don't really see the distinction between coming out
> and being who you are and proselytizing your gayness to the world. I
> might convert, I might recruit. (Adriana)

Weighed down by* other *people's baggage.

Daniel also talks about dealing with misinformation in his school setting,

regarding Judaism and Jewish identity, and being asked to speak in classes to give

background information.

> In the social studies class I asked to go in because the stuff that they're
> making them teach is just not true. It's one thing to not want to teach
> religion, but it's another thing to just make up history and teach that….
> When they told me, I was like, "No, that's wrong." It was fundamental
> belief stuff, as far as this is what the Jews thought of Jesus. And I'm
> like they don't all think the same. We don't have a meeting: "Right,
> we've covered how we're all gonna drive, now let's get to Jesus."
> …there's no pamphlet of "Here's how we feel," but that's how they
> teach it. It bothers me that we're not supposed to be teaching religion,
> we're just supposed to give some general information on
> religions…I'm not recruiting people for my Jew-club or anything, but
> at the same time, if they're going to gloss over things, let's gloss over
> correctly. (Daniel)

Both Adriana and Daniel allude to the idea that discussing their identity, either as

individuals or as members of communities, may be considered "recruiting." To

recruit, meaning "enlist new soldiers," dates back to 1655. Soldiers are trained for

battle. What battles might Daniel, a Jew, and Adriana, a lesbian, be perceived to be

fighting? Is there a social war between people of different identities?

The notion of recruiting also suggests, in the case of Adriana, that she could

make someone into a lesbian. The idea that Adriana could change a child's sexual

orientation is rooted in myths about how sexuality develops and the specific roots of

homosexuality. Additionally, it plays into the notion that people who are gay, lesbian,

bisexual, or transgender are predatory by nature and prey on young children. The

perpetuation of such ideas lays the groundwork for heterosexist ways of seeing the

world, in which the only "right" way to exist is in a relationship with someone of the opposite sex.

Can an individual ever feel safe and at home in a community when misinformation that affects how people see one an*other* abounds? Will Adriana ever be truly comfortable at her school, despite its social justice mission? After all, a mission does not have much meaning if those who support it do not understand the ongoing work they need to do to challenge their ingrained beliefs. From Adriana's discomfort, I turn to Daniel and Elisabeth's seeming comfort with certain aspects of their identity, and I wonder how we can all come to such a place.

Feeling comfortable in our own skin

Some forms of *othering* tap a nerve more directly than others. Why does this happen? Is this a result of personal growth, or does it have to do with our confidence in certain identities? Is it contextual? Does it have to do with understanding that the *otherer* also brings past experiences and memories to the table? Both Elisabeth and Daniel share that some forms of *othering* do not bother them.

Elisabeth is in an interracial relationship, but when asked if she and her partner have experienced prejudice or discrimination, she observes, "I think from my general world, not that I've been aware of. Maybe it's something I don't struggle with so I don't react to people's reactions." Similarly, Daniel, who has never hid the fact that he is Jewish, does not recall reacting strongly when he has heard stereotypes about Jews: "That has happened. I don't know if it's because of the way I am that I don't give that weight. It doesn't strike a chord for me." Are such responses a form of

denial, or do Elisabeth and Daniel simply demonstrate the process of picking their battles?

Deny is from the Latin *denegare, de-* meaning "away" and n*egare* meaning "refuse, say 'no.'" Is not responding a way of refusing to acknowledge that something painful has happened to us in order to make it go away? Denial is a more recent term meaning, "unconscious suppression of painful or embarrassing feelings." Do we not react to certain situations because certain memories are neatly tucked away? Do we not respond out of fear of drudging up a pain that is simply too much to bear? Can we benefit more from dealing with the pain instead of suppressing it? Perhaps facing the fear of our pain will in fact take the sting away, allowing us to move forward.

One might attribute Elisabeth's or Daniel's attitude to their personality, but can personality account for all of our actions? Elisabeth shares her reaction to some incidents of *othering*: "When someone taps my nerves, I let it out." She often responds to being *othered* by swearing. "It's a very effective comeback," she notes. "Then people just leave me alone." Daniel also responds quickly when his nerves are tapped by a member of the basketball team he coaches who uses an expression that is derogatory about Jews: "I was really clear in front of [the team]…we were all kind of in one area and I firmly, loudly told him that was the kind of stuff that we aren't a part of, that we as a team don't do that." Here Daniel and Elisabeth both note their swift response to *othering*, but their end results differ. By using an educational process, Daniel is able to create a level of understanding among those with whom he speaks. Elisabeth's aim is different. She does not choose to educate; she wants to cut

off the interaction, specifically so she does not have to engage, so the perpetrator will leave her alone.

But what determines when our nerves will be tapped? Is it the mood we're in? Does the identity of the *otherer* play a role? Or is it the power of our memories to resurface without our control? Elisabeth and Daniel have their hot buttons. Their lack of response to certain incidents is not necessarily related to their personality. For Daniel, proximity comes into play in his firm response. The boy who made the remark is someone he has known for years, someone whose family is close to his. Additionally, the incident occurred on his basketball team, a space that he cherishes and a community of individuals that he cares about. His response clarifies that as a team, they don't participate in derogatory language. He expects more of them when they are in his care. He has a vested relationship with them, and it is important to him that they know who he is and what his identity means to him. Daniel is able to pick his battles in casual exchanges, choosing not to react to stereotypes about Jews, but when this happens in his "home," he defends his interpretation of family, and clarifies what it looks and feels like when a group of people care about one an*other*.

Yet, Elisabeth's and Daniel's lack of response in certain situations that they don't "struggle with" or that "don't strike a chord" raises questions about how we feel in our various identities. What does it mean to struggle with something? The origin of struggle is uncertain. Some suggest its origin is "ill will." We struggle against things that present us with ill will, but what, then, of our internal struggles? Others suggest struggle is from the German *straucheln* "to stumble." Do our internal struggles cause

us to stumble through life, uncertain of how we should present ourselves, uncertain of how we will be perceived or treated if we reveal our true selves?

Erikson (1968), the psychoanalyst who first introduced the notion that identity is shaped by one's social, cultural, and historical context, writes that the process of identity formation is for the most part unconscious, "except where inner conditions and outer circumstances combine to aggravate a painful, or elated, 'identity consciousness'" (p. 23). Erikson's explanation suggests that reactions to *othering* are contextual. Is it possible that Elisabeth's experience as an Asian American female is completely different when she is in the company of her white partner? By being with a white man, does she in some way benefit from his privilege? The experiences she shares as an Asian American female reflect inner conditions and outer circumstances that conflict. But when she is with her partner this is not the case, or as she states, she is not aware of it. Elisabeth may be perceived differently by society when she is in her partner's company. Perhaps her lack of struggle being in an interracial relationship reflects society's acceptance of partnerships between white men and Asian women.

How do we, as educators, foster a strong sense of self among our students, so they do not stumble? The extent to which students feel isolated and alone affects their identity development. On identity, Erikson (1968) writes:

> An optimal sense of identity…is experienced merely as a sense of psychosocial well-being. Its most obvious concomitants are a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of "knowing where one is going," and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count. (p. 165)

Teachers are primary among "those who count." Haim Ginott's (1972) famous

quote reminds us just how much power teachers wield in the classroom:

> I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the
> classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily
> mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to
> make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an
> instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all
> situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or
> de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized. (pp. 15-16)

Educators and administrators must make it a top priority to ensure a nurturing

environment for all students. Far more than academic performance is at stake.

The Role of Memory in Keeping Our Baggage Locked Away and Unlocking it From Time to Time

> It's weird what we remember.
> (Daniel)

What is the purpose of memory? Does it serve as a filter, distilling things that

we do not need to hold on to, keeping in storage those thoughts that we might need

access to again in the future? Does our memory protect us, providing safety by

allowing us to forget things that are too painful for our gentle souls? What happens

when we experience something that triggers a painful memory? Do we relive that

memory, do we tuck it away, or do we try to learn from it and apply that learning to

our current stage of life?

Daniel shares an incident that triggers a memory from his childhood. In a

community print magazine, he saw that a local elementary school had a breakfast

with Santa, which was run by the Parent Teacher Association. The event was not

sponsored by the school, but the school provided the space for the event.

> I immediately thought back to when I was in elementary school and the
> feeling of kind of feeling left out…I vividly remember being on the bus on

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the way to and from school in first or second grade and kids singing Christmas Carols…and I remember not knowing the words and feeling like, you know, man…And kids would ask "How come you don't know the words, everybody knows the words?" Well, we don't sing these songs where I go to synagogue. I don't know the words. And so I instantly identified with kids that I had never met that went to this elementary school in Clifton, which is a very white, affluent area.…I hadn't thought about being on the bus and not knowing the words to *Silent Night* in about 20 years probably. But it instantly brought back this feeling for me that there's going to be some kid at whatever elementary school that is going to totally feel like "How come my family doesn't do that? What's wrong with me? What's wrong with us? Why are we different?" And it was a crappy feeling for me at the time and I felt bad for those kids instantly. It wasn't like a flashback but it was weird being on the adult side of something I hadn't thought about since I was 8 years old. (Daniel)

Daniel decides to learn from his memory. He contacts the Associate Superintendent whom he knows and informs her of what he perceives to be a problem.

And the point was that on Monday at school some kid is going to go to his friend and say, "Hey, how come you weren't at the breakfast with Santa?" And this Muslim kid, or Jewish kid, or Atheist kid, or Hindu kid is going to say, "Because I don't do that." …I know it wasn't the goal, but the end result of that breakfast with Santa is that 6, 10, 15, I don't know how many kids felt ostracized and totally left out because of their religion or their belief or their non-religion or whatever…She [the Associate Superintendent] is a great lady, and she was like "What are we going to do?" (Daniel)

In beginning a conversation with someone who has the capacity to create change, Daniel has used his past painful memory for future good.

What does it mean to remember? Remember comes from the Latin *rememorari*, *re* meaning "again" and *memorari*, "be mindful of." What is our mental process when we are mindful of something? When I facilitate workshops, I frequently say, "We want to be mindful of" our attitudes, behaviors, intentions, etc… as a way of emphasizing our need to be aware of how our biases affect *others*. Through the process of remembering, we become aware again of our experiences around prejudice

and discrimination. Awareness is the first step in eliminating prejudice and discrimination. Through intentional remembering of painful situations as both *other* and *otherer*, we can remain true to a social justice agenda that begins with awareness.

On memory, Casey (1993) writes:

The things of memory *remain with me*, within me. They occupy interior psychical (and doubtless neurological) places and are the determinative loci of my life. I remain *with them* as well by returning to them in diverse acts of remembering. (p. 129)

While Daniel had not thought of his experience as a child on the school bus in years, the experience remained a part of him. The memory is with him, inside him, but his power to forget is just as strong as his power to remember. Forgetting allows us to forge ahead in spite of painful experiences. Forgetting allows us to achieve a "splendid lightness" instead of the "heavy burden" of remembering (Kundera, 1984/1991). But what does this lightness offer us? In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* Kundera asks, "Is heaviness truly deplorable and lightness splendid?…The heavier the burden, the closer our lives come to the earth, the more real and truthful they become" (p. 5). Lightness, or rather forgetfulness, becomes unbearable by removing that which grounds us, that which forms the substance of our lived experience. Kundera continues:

The absolute absence of a burden causes man to be lighter than air, to soar into the heights, take leave of the earth and his earthly body, and become only half real, his movements as free as they are insignificant. (p. 5)

Remembering, returning to our past memories, brings us back to that which is significant in our lives, in our histories. Our memories keep our lived experience alive. Can we be true to ourselves if we choose the path of forgetting? Casey wonders

if in the modern world it is too late to choose the way of remembering over the way

of forgetting. "Can we remember to remember?" he asks (Casey, 2000, p. 4).

How true are the memories we recall? Can I honestly and accurately recall

what happened to me when I was a child, more than thirty years ago. I rely on the

emotions that reside within me which are attached to certain memories, but to say I

can recall every detail of an incident would be inauthentic. Tim O'Brien (1990) faces

this challenge when trying to write about his experiences as a soldier in Vietnam. He

illustrates just how difficult it is to communicate one's experience and the need, at

times, to separate "happening-truth" from "story-truth" in order to be true to one's

emotions. O'Brien asks us not to find meaning in the truth of the story he writes but

in the truth of the emotion we feel while reading it. According to O'Brien "Story-

truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth" (p. 179). In order to *feel* what O'Brien

felt, he must write to recreate the emotions of his experiences, which requires

embellishment and imagination as well as memory. Can we reflect on and learn from

the non-real? What is, in fact, real? For Tim O'Brien reflecting and writing about

events 20 years later, attaching faces to his emotions, requires that he use his

imagination where reality falls short. The events do not matter. It is the feelings that

the events evoke which bring meaning and truth to a story. What purpose, then, does

it serve to make meaning from our memories if this process prevents us from

interacting with the *other*?

Remembering requires responsibility. Casey writes, "*Our memories are up to*

us. But for the most part and ever increasingly, we have come to disclaim

responsibility for them" (p. 2). It is easier for me to live my life forgetting the times I

have hurt people through my words and actions. I prefer to think of myself as respectful of all individuals. Acknowledging my biases requires that I take responsibility for the moments of ugliness in which I have abandoned kindness. When forgetting is easier, what is the value in reflecting on my experiences as *otherer*? How can such reflection help me and those whom I have *othered*?

Frequently in my workshops, I talk to students about the many roles we play in incidents of prejudice and discrimination: target (*other*), perpetrator (*otherer*), bystander and ally. I share times I have found myself in each of these roles and ask students to think about a time when they have acted in each role. I then ask students to share in small groups one of their experiences. Invariably, in the discussion that follows, students reveal that the most difficult experiences to think of and to share are times when they acted as a perpetrator. Some say they could not think of a time when they were a perpetrator. The act of forgetfulness is deeply entrenched. I assure them that in time, if they dig deep enough, they will remember an experience. Why reflect on such experiences? Janine, a student in a recent anti-bias workshop, shares that through these roles, she could see her path from middle school into high school. She had experiences as a target, bullied by her sister, and in turn she bullied students at school. In a new high school, she chose to remain silent when witnessing acts of bullying and name-calling, but now as a participant in our anti-bias workshop, she sees herself developing the skills of a strong ally. Her reflection enables her to think about what led her to *other*. Additionally, the process of talking about experiences allows students to see that they are not alone in acting in any one of these roles. What

does awareness of our actions require of us? When we become mindful of our behaviors, must we then seek to rectify them?

From consideration of our past experiences as they influence our *othering*, we move to our present and future. My male participants reveal experiences as young adults in which they actively engaged in *othering*. The nature of their experiences leads me to wonder if the way in which they *othered* is a part of the passage to adulthood.

Crossing the Channel: *Othering* as a Rite of Passage

As a firm believer that prejudice is learned and can be unlearned, I have never entertained the possibility that *othering* people might, in fact, be a process we must all take part in as social beings. If our society socializes us to believe in subordinate and dominant groups, must we live these ideas out in order to challenge them? Is *othering* a necessary stage of our development, a rite of passage? And if so, how do educators ensure that students get through this passage to the *other* side, realizing that *othering* is a destructive process for the self as well as the *other*.

College: A Place to Freely Other?

My two male participants share experiences around *othering* in college that lead me to question this notion of *othering* as a rite of passage. They knew their actions were wrong, but their *othering* happened as part of the bonding process with a group of males.

Daniel discusses the phenomenon of bonding through telling jokes with his fraternity brothers in college.

> I was in a fraternity. We were all not well off, but similar background. Different religions…Somebody would tell a joke about this and I

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> would tell a joke about that….The more inappropriate the better
> because it's funnier. There were no boundaries where you have to
> worry about offending somebody because we knew everybody so well.
> The only difference was religion, for the most part…and now thinking
> about it, I wonder if it was because of me. That was the one area…we
> wouldn't tell jokes about religion. And that probably was them
> worried that [I'd be offended]…We would tell jokes about Black
> people or gay people or whoever, but don't say anything about
> religion, because I'm sitting here and I have feelings. Looking back,
> that seems pretty ridiculous. (Daniel)

Like Daniel, Curtis remembers bonding experiences with his male friends, which, in

his case, took the form of objectifying women.

> In college I was terrible. In college my boys and I we had a contest
> about who could hook up with the most girls. It was like a point
> system. That's total *othering*….It was called the champion lover
> competition and so, you know, I shouldn't do that….It was like most
> boys who do stupid stuff, we knew it was wrong, we thought it was
> funny, and we certainly weren't going to talk about it with our
> girlfriends or our female friends, but we did it anyway, which is just
> further stupidity. …There's a certain amount of shame that I feel about
> it. And then to "say boys will be boys" is not good enough. (Curtis)

Does college create a space where *othering* is an accepted practice, or is it

only acceptable for some? Lyman (1987) interviewed several fraternity men and

sorority women about sexist jokes following an incident in which the males entered

the sorority and forced the females to listen to one of the fraternity brothers give a

speech on penis envy and other sexual antics. According to Lyman, jokes "are not just

stories, they are a theater of domination in everyday life" (p. 170). What relationships

of power are reinforced through the telling of jokes? While no one in Daniel's

fraternity may have been the subject of the jokes told, the process of telling

derogatory, offensive jokes serves to replicate systems of power that keep certain

groups on top and *others* on the bottom. Lyman (1987) analyzes male bonding

through the telling of jokes and finds that not all agree on the content of the jokes,

though they do find telling jokes necessary for the process of forming male friendships. The relationships within the fraternity take precedence over the greater implications and consequences of perpetuating sexism.

Masculinity: Perpetuating Sexism and Homophobia

Kimmel (2000) explores masculinity as centered around sexism and homophobia. He perceives of sexism as a way of men gaining approval from other men.

> That men prove their manhood in the eyes of other men is both a consequence of sexism and one of its chief props….Women become a kind of currency that men use to improve their ranking on the masculine social scale. Masculinity is a *homosocial* enactment. We test ourselves, perform heroic feats, take enormous risks, all because we want other men to grant us our manhood. (p. 214)

The process of male bonding is not simply a way to form friendships, it is a means of proving oneself and defending one's masculinity. A further way to gain approval from other men is to not appear gay:

> Homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood….Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear….We are ashamed to be afraid. Shame leads to silence—the silence that keeps other people believing that we actually approve of the things that are done to women, to minorities, to gays and lesbians in our culture. (Kimmel, p. 214)

Homophobia and sexism together provide ways for men to demonstrate their "realness," but what does it mean to be a real man when so much of this identity construction is based on negating who one is for the sake of approval? What is real in the act of remaining silent when we believe something is wrong? What is true about hiding one's emotions for fear of being perceived as a "sissy?" Can we even imagine

a reality where from the time they are born, boys are nurtured to be true to themselves?

Returning to Curtis's experience, what does he mean by the phrase "boys will be boys?" Curtis explains further:

> Well, this is one of the dangers maybe of going to an all boys school …if part of your upbringing is "here's my world and then we can go over there where the *girls are* (whispers)," then that's gonna f--- with your mind a little bit. Now I was glad to get to a co-ed campus with co-ed dorms. I remember when we checked into my dorm and it was boy, girl, boy, girl, all the rooms, my dad gave me little nudge…just like ok, son, go on now. I've often said that all-girls schools probably do more good than all boys schools because all-boys schools perpetuate patriarchy in ways that harm, and for the most part all-girls schools are more of a bastion against patriarchy. (Curtis)

Does society have a different set of rules for male sexuality and female sexuality? Assigned to a co-ed dorm, Curtis is given an encouraging nudge by his father. What is the likelihood that a father would give his daughter a similar nudge? How are females who are comfortable with their sexuality perceived? How are males perceived? Society's double standard regarding sexual behavior often results in females being labeled sluts, while males are given praise. The phrase "boys will be boys" allows males to act inappropriately in social situations without consequence. In excusing and dismissing offensive male behavior, society perpetuates a system of patriarchy that keeps women subordinate.

A study of religious and gender perspectives on sexual promiscuity, involving 116 undergraduate male and female students, found that regardless of gender or religious affiliation, students held negative attitudes toward female promiscuity (Demauriac, 2003). Demauriac notes, "Sexual psychology seems to have been largely affected by social influences, thus perceived societal views on promiscuity ultimately

affected individual perspectives on appropriate sexual behavior"

(missouriwestern.edu). Our views are very much shaped by social influences.

Landau, Greenberg, Solomon, Martens, Goldenberg, Gillath, Cox, and

Pyszczynski (2006) maintain that male misogynistic attitudes and behavior stems

from a concern over "women's power to provoke sexual desire" (p. 130). They point

to religion as one source of guarded reactions to female sexuality, but beyond the

domain of religion lies men's fear of the power of women's sexuality to undermine

social order: "Women's sexual influence has even been branded as debilitating,

poisonous, and fatal" (p. 130). Thus, maintaining women as pure and chaste, adhering

to a different set of sexual rules than men, serves to preserve the status quo in which

men dominate.

The consequences of men's fear of women's sexuality have been traumatic for

women and include the practice of female circumcision in many cultures. But not all

consequences are so obvious:

> More insidiously, many of the prevalent derogatory terms for women are
> explicitly sexual (e.g., slut, whore), and women who are typically
> associated with sex (sex industry workers, sorority girls, even blondes) are
> targets of belittlement, harassment, physical and sexual abuse, social
> censure, and victim derogation. (Landau et al., 2006, p. 130)

The language we use to refer to women reflects the superiority of males over females.

Language echoes the power dynamics that exist in society, contributing to the

"invisibility and regeneration of privilege" (Wildman & Davis, 2000, p. 50). In the

case of gender,

> The apparently neutral categories *male* and *female*, mask the privileging of
> males that is part of the gender power system. Try to think of equivalent
> gendered titles, like king and queen, prince and princess, and you will

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> quickly see that *male* and *female* are not equal titles in our cultural
> imagination. (Wildman & Davis, 2000, p. 51)

The pretense of language neutrality attempts to mask the inequity between males and females, but words do not lie. The differences in language used to refer to males and females reflect the reality of a system that privileges males. Once the privilege is unmasked, productive conversations can occur that attempt to re-envision the cultural hierarchy implicit in the language around gender and other areas of difference, including race and sexual orientation.

It is important to note, however, that men do not exclusively view women negatively, though the impact of "positive" views is not necessarily positive. Tavris and Offir (1977) refer to "pedestal-gutter syndrome" to describe the tendency among men to juxtapose negative attitudes toward women with adoration and worship: "Woman has been esteemed, worshiped, and protected as often as she has been loathed, ignored, and reviled…Woman is goddess and devil, virgin and whore, sweet Madonna and malevolent mom…. These views represent a single attitude: woman is different" (p. 3). Glick and Fiske (2003) discuss the notion of benevolent sexism, in which the perpetrator "characteriz[es] women as pure creatures who ought to be protected, supported, and adored" (p. 225), and comment that benevolent sexism is as harmful as sexist antipathy in contributing to gender inequality. Glick and Fiske observe that subordination and affection often go hand in hand. As long as the subordinate group maintains its subordinate status and does not rebel, the dominant group will view them favorably. And women contribute to this dynamic by accepting benevolent sexism. As with all systems of oppression, benevolent sexism exists because it rewards those who support it. But these rewards do not come without a

price: "The irony is that women are forced to seek protection from members of the very group that threatens them, and the greater the threat, the stronger the incentive to accept benevolent sexism's protective ideology" (Glick & Fiske, p. 229). Women must come to terms with the fact that they play a part in maintaining and perpetuating sexism.

Kimmel (2000) offers a ray of hope in this seemingly dismal discussion. He argues that the fact that manhood is based on socially constructed notions actually provides possibilities for change.

> This idea that manhood is socially constructed and historically shifting should not be understood as a loss, that something is being taken away from men. In fact, it gives us something extraordinarily valuable—agency, the capacity to act. It gives us a sense of historical possibilities to replace the despondent resignation that invariably attends timeless, ahistorical essentialisms. Our behaviors are not simply "just human nature," because "boys will be boys." From the materials we find around us in our culture—other people, ideas, objects—we actively create our worlds, our identities. Men, both individually and collectively, can change…(p. 213)

The ways of being a boy/man in the world are not innate; they are learned. But in order to contribute to change, we have to understand the system that values a "boys will be boys" approach.

What happens when our male and female youth enter college? What is it about this particular space that allows individuals to participate in *othering* at a level that they may not have prior? With regard to the penis-envy speech, one of Lyman's interviewees notes, "That's what I joined the fraternity for, a good time. College is a stage in my life to do crazy and humorous things" (p. 174). The fraternal bond, as established through the ritual bonding of telling jokes, therefore, has a specific place in the male life cycle between boyhood and manhood (Lyman, 1987). College

represents a time of separation from the authority of parents and a time of reprieve before being subjected to the authority of the work place. And for some, this translates into offensive behavior that perpetuates systems of patriarchy and dominance.

But college does not represent such restlessness for all individuals. Elisabeth speaks of her college experience in different ways, focusing on her way through the "passage."

> I think my women's studies program gave me an appreciation for understanding that gender is really a social construct. And that gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, to me before women's studies, I was like it's pretty much set and then I think after I kind of see it as something fluid. …I think women's studies gave me an appreciation of like everybody can be themselves and it's ok. We don't have to have this massive right wing response, like we need to have a traditional family, we need to have a man and woman together and it just allowed me to be more open-minded and accepting of people and how they express themselves. (Elisabeth)

Elisabeth's college studies allow her to think differently about her family upbringing which emphasized traditional relationships between a man and woman: "I was brought up Catholic and so, it's like Chinese plus Catholicism together that kind of lay out 'these are the rules and you should follow these rules.'" She confronts her beliefs and challenges them by introducing herself to new perspectives that help her understand the nuances of identity.

If we pursue the suggestion that *othering* is a rite of passage for some, how do we ensure that our youth continue through this passage to the other side, to a place where they realize the inappropriateness and harmfulness of their words and actions? And can we pre-empt this process in a way that addresses, from a young age, the notion that "boys will be boys?"

And what about our girls in school? What is the message young women

receive when they are treated differently than their male peers? Pharr (1997) defines

patriarchy as "an enforced belief in male dominance and control" (p. 8) maintained

through systems of power that keep women subordinate to men. The process of

gendering males and females begins at birth: "Every society classifies people as 'girl

and boy children,'…constructs similarities among them and differences between

them, and assigns them to different roles and responsibilities" (Lorber, 2000, p. 205).

How do these differences manifest in the classroom? What are our expectations of

our female and male students in the classroom, and how do these expectations take a

different shape when combined with differences in race, class, and other areas of

difference? And where do our students who do not fit stereotypical gender roles find

their place in our classroom?

In this chapter I have moved frequently between experiences as *other* and

otherer. In this last section I continue this movement, highlighting the various roles

we play in society around prejudice and discrimination. But my focus turns

specifically to the ways in which we respond to *othering*, considering the possibility

of learning from our pain.

Swimming Upstream: *Othering* as an Empowering Experience

> I say remember the pain because I believe true resistance begins with
> people confronting pain, whether it's theirs or somebody else's, and
> wanting to do something to change it. (hooks, 1990**,** p. 215)

What do we do when *othered*? How do we respond? Do we ignore the

experience? Do we express our sadness, anger, frustration, or disdain for the *otherer*?

Do we try to educate the *otherer* about the pain they have caused? A number of

factors can influence our response, including the level of safety we perceive, our relationship to the *otherer*, and the impact of the *othering*. What are the ways in which we can learn from our painful experiences, ensuring that *others* do not feel a similar pain? How can we turn our experiences as *other* into empowering incidents? Adriana and Daniel explain how their lives changed following particular experiences as *other*, compelling them to a work proactively toward transforming the ways in which people engage with one an*other*.

From **Othered** *to Ally*

How can we connect our future responses with our past experiences? For Adriana, the circumstances under which she was fired from her position as a religion teacher at a Catholic School—the school she attended as a child—have led her to rethink her reactions in similar situations.

> The thing that I think bothered me most was knowing that…was the head of school knowing my financial position and then her attempt at trying to exert her power and then silence me. And that combination of those two things I think is what just irks me the most. And that, I think, has definitely transferred into everything since that I do. Whenever I see anybody, or I sense even, that anybody is trying to use their influence or use their power to gain a step up or to silence somebody or to gain an edge, I'm like a bulldog. It bothers me to know that someone can gain an unfair advantage just because of the position that they're in. (Adriana)

Adriana has chosen to remember her pain, but she does not wallow in it. She uses it as a vehicle, a catalyst to create change. Adriana talks rather freely about being fired because of her sexual orientation. Sharing the story with me was not new to her. She is familiar with the pain, has confronted it and talks about it so *others* can learn from her. In using her pain to create change, Adriana has moved beyond herself to consider the experiences of those around her. She has learned from her pain and has chosen to

interrupt acts that have a similar stench of an abuse of power. Importantly, she

interrupts acts that affect *others*, not just herself. It is only when we begin to support

those who are not like us, that we can begin to address inequity in society.

Similarly, Daniel's behavior changes once he experiences being *othered.*

> I took this special ed class in college. Thirty-five students. I am the
> male in the room…It was a class, like a survey of learning disabilities.
> Anytime the entire semester [the instructor] referred to a teacher, it
> was "her," she or her. Anytime she referred to a student with a
> learning disability, it was him or he…That was awful for me. Really?
> All teachers are women and all LD kids are boys? Honestly, and this is
> a weird thing for me, I felt so literally, not alone because I knew
> people in the class, but alone because there's no way anybody else in
> the class was picking up on it, because they were all girls…And I
> never felt like I could go to her and say anything because I was going
> to be the only one saying it. And I'm not exaggerating, never once did
> she flip them and since then that's been a soapbox for me…I will
> verbally correct people, my bosses, in meetings, and say "You mean
> they." That was 6 years ago. I still to this day will out loud correct
> people to the point that I have probably been a little rude about it.
> (Daniel)

Sharing this experience triggers additional memories for Daniel. In talking about

using gender-neutral language, he remembers someone who modeled this for him

when he was younger.

> I immediately thought of…we had a Rabbi, Rabbi Sally Baum, and
> she, when were reading from the prayer book, any time it said he or
> him or his in the Bible, would gender nullify, she would not make it
> gender bound, out loud in front of the congregation…[She would say]
> they or God. (Daniel)

The fact that Daniel remembers Rabbi Baum's language reminds us of the power of

modeling the behavior we want to see in the world. As educators we must be mindful

that what we say and do carries tremendous weight with our students.

Adriana's and Daniel's actions are a part of what Harro (2000) defines as the

cycle of liberation—liberation meaning critical transformation. Participation in this

cycle occurs as people come to understand the nature of oppression and their role in contributing to it. Once understood, they "seek new paths for creating social change and taking themselves toward empowerment or liberation" (p. 463). As is the case with both Daniel and Adriana, liberation often begins with what Harro terms a "waking up" phase (p. 465):

> Often liberation begins when a person begins to experience herself differently in the world than s/he has in the past. It is marked by an intrapersonal change: a change in the core of someone about what s/he believes about her/himself. This may be the result of a critical incident or a long slow evolutionary process that shifts our worldviews. (p. 465)

Adriana and Daniel had pivotal experiences that changed the course of their lives in terms of their interactions with the *other*. In taking a stance, they have taken on new challenges based on their core beliefs about social justice. Harro writes, "Liberation is *passion and compassion*" (p. 469). It is Adriana's and Daniel's passion for social justice and compassion for the *other* that keep them moving forward.

Resisting oppression, assuming a proactive stance, as Adriana and Daniel have done, takes constant work. Fighting oppression is like swimming upstream, confronting the daily barrage of messages put forth by a society in which dominant groups benefit from their status. Swimming against the current is physically and mentally exhausting, but headway can be made, and we are certainly stronger for the effort.

Resistance as a Humanizing Endeavor in Education

Freire (2005) reminds us of the educator's role in standing up in the face of oppression:

> Another testimony that should not be missing from our relationship with students is the testimony of our constant commitment to justice,

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liberty, and individual rights, of our dedication to defending the weakest when they are subjected to the exploitation of the strongest. It is important, also, in this daily task, to show students that there is beauty in the ethical struggle. (p. 100)

Freire emphasizes the teacher's relationship with the student, but the question remains: How do we teach our students to defend "the weakest when they are subjected to the exploitation of the strongest?" To take on such a task, we must first be familiar with the structures and systems of oppression that are in place. We must know our environment and how it works to advantage some while disadvantaging *others*. To make this point, Dewey (1938) compares traditional education to progressive education. He observes that with traditional education,

> There was no demand that the teacher should become intimately acquainted with the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc.., in order to utilize them as educational resources. A system of education based upon the necessary connection of education with experience must, on the contrary, if faithful to its principle, take these things constantly into account. (p. 40)

We must learn the environment of our students, what they live and breathe, how they experience life outside of our classrooms. We have to bring the outside in, if we want to contribute to social transformation.

To begin efforts at resistance requires a re-envisioning of what it means to educate. In the epilogue of Ginott's book *Teacher and Child* (1972), he prints a note from a principal to all teachers on the first day of school:

> Dear Teacher:
> I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:
> Gas chambers built by *learned* engineers.
> Children poisoned by *educated* physicians.
> Infants killed by *trained* nurses.
> Women and babies shot and burned by *high school* and *college* graduates.

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> So, I am suspicious of education.
> My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts
> must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths,
> educated Eichmanns.
> Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve
> to make our children more humane. (p. 317)

Educators need to re-claim the educational domain in ways that emphasize what it means to be human in the world and to act humanely with *others*. When we treat our students like empty vessels to be filled, when we interact with them as if they have no soul, when we enact the classroom as a space that is disconnected from the realities beyond the schoolyard, we deny our students the opportunity to become who they truly are. Dewey (1938) writes that the teacher must have "that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning" (p. 39). To relate to our students as human beings and to teach them how to be human in the world, to help them along their way, we must know who they are.

In response to the letter in Ginott's book, Buscaglia (1982) comments, "Nobody teaches you how to be a human being and what it means to be a human being, and the dignity that it means when you say, 'I am a human being'" (p. 131). Van manen (1997) reminds us that being human is a process: "A human being is not something you automatically *are*, it is also something you must try to *be*" (p. 5). He relates a story about the Greek philosopher, Diogenes, to clarify this point:

> One day Diogenes was reported to have gone about the city in clear
> daylight with a lit lantern looking about as if he had lost something. When
> people came up to ask what he was trying to find he answered: "Even with
> a lamp in broad daylight I cannot find a real human being," and when
> people pointed to themselves he chased them with a stick, shouting "it is
> *real* human beings I want." (p. 5)

What, in fact, does it mean to be a human being and to act humanely, or in the interest of humanity? Humane is defined as "marked by compassion, sympathy, or consideration for humans." Humanity is from the Old French *humanite*, meaning "human nature." In English, its original meaning was "kindness or graciousness." By teaching students kindness, compassion and consideration, we are teaching them to become human beings.

On kindness, Ferrucci (2006) writes:

Kindness is essential at all levels of education since we learn more in an atmosphere of warmth and attention than of indifference and repression. A child treated with tenderness grows healthily, a student who receives respect and attention can make much progress. (p. 13)

Why is kindness such a challenging concept to enact? It seems as though in our increasingly individualistic society, in which the notion of community is becoming lost, people withhold their kindness. What does one have to gain by withholding something that is so easy and leaves us so satisfied? In terms of kindness in the classroom, it is helpful to return to Noddings' (2005b) notion of care. She notes, "When I care, I really hear, see, or feel what the other tries to convey" (p. 16). By being attentive to our students and treating them humanely, we communicate that they are our equal as human beings. In doing so, we re-envision what it means to have power or authority in the classroom so we can re-frame and re-claim the purpose of education. By focusing on the development of our students' souls as well as their minds, we can create communities of belonging where our students can find their anchors.

Heading Toward a Different Shore: Turning to the Classroom

The five themes I have explored in this chapter are like tributaries ending in a greater body of water. They each have unique elements, and once combined, they increase my understanding of what it means to live as both *other* and *otherer*. But the water is vast and deep; it cannot be contained, as it has a life of its own. *Othering* is not something I can distill and bottle to be shipped off with a nice, new label. It is in many ways an amorphous mass that changes shape the more I try to understand it. And the more I understand, the more questions I have. To help me deepen my exploration, my participants share with me experiences around *othering* that take place in the school environment. The stories they share with me form the core of Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: SIGHTING LAND AND RAISING THE ANCHOR:

REFLECTION AS OUR GUIDE IN SEEING THE *OTHER*

My conversations with teachers reveal that *othering* takes place throughout their lives. Just as they experience and participate in *othering* in their personal lives, they also experience this phenomenon in the school context. What does *othering* in school look like? What does it *feel* like? What are the consequences for teachers and their students when *othering* takes place in the microcosm of society we call school?

From the second set of conversations with my group of participants, three themes emerged relating to their interactions in school. The experience of teaching is shaped by how people perceive us. In the school context, as in society, the teachers I spoke with are social beings, subjected to the social constructs relating to their identity. How they experience life as a teacher is often shaped by the perceptions students, parents, and colleagues have of them. And, similarly, social constructs often determine, and limit, how they see their students. Much as these teachers might like to view their students through clear lenses, this is not always possible. And, finally, intervening in classroom situations involving *othering* is a conscious choice on the part of my teachers. Regardless of the biases they hold or their level of awareness of these biases, these teachers choose to take a stand in the classroom.

As I explore the meaning behind the stories of my five participants, I delve deeper into the experience of being treated as an outsider. What is it like to be *othered* in the school context, and how does this experience influence our interactions with those around us? As if struggling through turbulent waters, my participants experience *othering* with

their eyes open, staying afloat, weathering the storm. And when the weather clears, the calm waters reveal a reflection of the self that compels them to stand with the *other*.

Surviving the Riptide: Experiences as *Other* in the School Context

All five of my participants have been *othered* in the school environment, at times by colleagues, students, and parents. Frequently, questions of power are at play in these interactions. Whether it is their gender, race, or age, their identity in some way marks them as *other*, and in the examples they provide, this demarcation of difference leaves them feeling frustrated and angry. Their teaching experience is shaped by how people perceive them. My participants have no difficulty recalling painful instances of *othering* in schools, but despite the plethora of experiences they share, they do not waiver in their commitment to social justice. Instead of getting caught in the riptide, they swim through it, reaching a place where they can safely swim parallel to shore. They are stronger for surviving the riptide, and they are able to think more clearly about their interactions with students in the classroom.

Harro (2000) explains how social identities related to gender, race, ethnicity, language, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, class, etc…affect our interactions in society:

> We are each born into a specific set of *social identities…*and these social identities predispose us to unequal *roles* in the dynamic system of oppression. We are then socialized by powerful sources in our worlds to play the roles prescribed by an inequitable social system. (p. 15)

Our socialization begins before we are born. We are born into a world where "assumptions, rules, roles and structures of oppression are already in place and functioning: we have had nothing to do with constructing them" (Harro, 2000, p. 16). When we are born we are socialized by our families and those responsible for raising us.

We are socialized to think of ourselves and *others* in certain ways: "We are told things like 'Boys don't cry'; 'You shouldn't trust white people'; 'Don't kiss other girls. You're supposed to kiss boys'; 'Christianity is the true religion'" (Harro, p. 17).

Once we begin to interact with people outside of our family, we become exposed to institutional and cultural socialization that occurs at school, places of worship, businesses, etc…We are flooded with messages of *others* we cannot control:

> We are inundated with unquestioned and stereotypical messages that shape how we think and what we believe about ourselves and others. What makes this 'brainwashing' even more insidious is the fact that it is woven into every structural thread of the fabric of our culture. The media, our language patterns, the lyrics to songs, our cultural practices and holidays, and the very assumptions on which our society is built all contribute to the reinforcement of the biased messages and stereotypes we receive. (Harro, 2000, p. 18)

We generally buy into these messages because society tends to reinforce them through processes of privilege and reward for those who adhere to them.

My participants' stories provide vivid examples of the socialization process. Raised Catholic, both Elisabeth and Adriana were taught to believe that there was only one way to have a loving relationship—between a man and woman. It is years before they begin to challenge this notion. Elisabeth was taught to believe that people from Hong Kong were of a higher class than people born elsewhere and living in Hong Kong. Only recently has she begun to think differently about her connection to her Chinese identity. Shortly, we will hear about messages Adriana received from her father when she was growing up—messages about Jews—which come back to haunt her decades after they were first told. Just as our process of socialization continues throughout our lives, so too does the process of combating it.

Johnson (1999) expands on the notion of socialization by looking at the interaction between people and social systems: "Socialization is merely a process, a mechanism for training people to participate in social systems…. [Socialization] can tell us something about the *how* of a system like patriarchy, but very little about the *what* and the *why*" (p. 82). He continues:

> If a society is oppressive, then people who grow up and live in it will tend to accept, identify with, and participate in it as a "normal" and unremarkable life. That's the path of least resistance in any system. It's hard not to follow it, given how we depend on society and its rewards and punishments that hinge on going along with the status quo. When oppression is woven into the fabric of everyday life, we don't need to go out of our way to be overtly oppressive in order for an oppressive system to produce oppressive consequences. (p. 78)

While socialization is a powerful process shaping how we feel as a person of a certain race, class, or gender and how we perceive *others*, we cannot limit our exploration and analysis to the level of the individual. To effect change, we must understand and challenge the system that accepts, acknowledges, and rewards biased behavior.

Schools are a place where people in various roles converge: parents, administrators, students, and at the center lies the teacher. The experiences of my participants reveal that despite the power differential between students and teachers, students at times *other* them.

The Student as Otherer

Our social identities are always with us. How is our experience as an educator shaped by the socialization of *others*, by the assumptions they place on us? Working in a co-teaching setting, Daniel often gets mistaken as an assistant by his students.

The kids will say, "Aren't you so and so's assistant in geometry?" "No, I'm not. I'm a teacher with Ms. Byrd in geometry, but I'm not her assistant." "But she's like the real teacher and you're like the other guy." "No, I'm actually a teacher."…That's annoying because…it's degrading. No, I am not Ms. Byrd's assistant. I don't go in and take attendance and get her coffee. I provide differentiated instruction for kids that need it and I'm good at math….I hate that, I mean hate it.

How do such assumptions shape our teaching practice and our interactions with students? Where do we put the anger and frustration that accompanies such dismissive interactions? Does it "fester like a sore" (Hughes, 1959/1990), or do we let go of it, excusing our students for not knowing any better?

What does it mean to teach? As the *other* guy, is Daniel a teacher in the classroom in the same capacity as Ms. Byrd? Do his credentials make him a teacher? What authorizes Daniel to be in the classroom and engage with students? Aoki (2005e) writes: "In the truest sense, 'authority' does not flow from assignment of position by powered people, nor from receipt of certified pieces of paper. Authority flows from being true to whatever phenomenon claims the person" (p. 436). By stating ideas of what it means to be a teacher, or at least to look like one, the student raises questions of power in the classroom. For the student, Ms. Byrd has power that Daniel does not. The student exhibits power by doubting Daniel's expertise in a way that disturbs Daniel. What are the consequences of such displays of power in the classroom? As I questioned in Chapter Two, can we think differently about power dynamics so there is no attempt for power-over in the school, but instead power-with? Kreisburg (1993) describes power-with as the possibility of interacting with *others* in positive and productive ways through relationships of co-agency. What would schools look like if relationships were based on power-with?

In listening to Daniel's story, I am reminded of my first year teaching at the college level. I was a graduate assistant teaching English as a Second Language in the intensive English program of a large public university. At the age of 24 I was only slightly older than most of my university-age students and I was younger than some. I vividly remember being approached by some of my students at the beginning of the year teacher-student gathering and being asked my age. I chose not to tell them and let my effectiveness as a teacher speak for itself. Several years later at the age of 30 while working at the Anti-Defamation League, I found myself in a similar situation. Providing civil rights and hate crimes training for law enforcement as a young-looking female was not easy. I struggled continually to gain credibility until one day I realized that there was nothing I could do to shape how the audience saw me. No business suit or short hair cut would make me look older. And once I became aware that I was not the problem, I felt a tremendous sense of liberation. I focused on being true to myself, trusting my capabilities and my knowledge. And I was able to move forward. I continue this conversation on age in the next section on colleagues *othering* teachers.

As a Black male, Curtis is at times challenged by his male students, though in many cases the students are also African American.

> There have been times when some of my African American students maybe have challenged, tested me either because they weren't used to a male African American figure in front of them or because they weren't used to an African American male talking like I talk. I definitely have butted heads with students of many different races who tested my authority. I think that sometimes I felt like as a male, I was being tested. And my assumption was that whoever the student was, Black or otherwise, may not be used to seeing a male authority figure.

I've definitely got Black males who are like, "you can't speak to me that way." Maybe it's because they have made the decision that no one challenges them in whatever way I was challenging them, or no Black male who is older than them does that, because they're not their father.

Like Daniel, Curtis has interactions that raise questions about power and authority. What does it mean to have authority in the classroom? The etymology of authority directs me to the Latin *auctoritatem* meaning "invention, advice, opinion, influence, command." The French *autorite* is from 1393 and carries the meaning "power to enforce obedience." Authority, as such, can be detrimental in the classroom. What becomes of the teacher-student relationship when authority is interpreted as power? What if teachers and students shared power, based on relationships of trust? What happens to our teaching and our interactions with our students when we present ourselves as an authority figure? Can students find a safe space in the classroom when there is the looming presence of an authority figure? How is their honesty and authenticity suppressed under such conditions?

Gadamer (1975/2004) suggests a different meaning of authority:

Authority has to do not with obedience but rather with knowledge…Thus, acknowledging authority is always connected with the idea that what the authority says is not irrational and arbitrary but can, in principle, be discovered to be true. This is the essence of the authority claimed by the teacher, the superior, the expert. (p. 281)

Gadamer presents the teacher as the knowledge expert, but even this sense of authority seems disconnected to the aims of teaching for transformation. What becomes of the knowledge that the students bring to the classroom, and what place does the notion of the teacher as learner have in this understanding of authority?

In considering where our authority comes from and what gives teachers authority in the classroom, I turn to Aoki (2005f). He speaks of the teacher and student as leader and follower, in questioning what it means to lead. He asks, "What authorizes a person to be a leader?" and his answer summons an understanding of authority that is wholly separate from the etymological basis of the word.

> We seek in a leader…that form of authority that flows from insightfulness and wisdom that knows the good and the worthy in a situation that must be followed….Hence, when we ask, 'What authorizes a person to be a leader?' we must not be swayed by the management sort of authority—for that is not being true to what authority truly is—but guided more by the deep sense of authority that speaks to leadership linked to authentic followership. (p. 351)

In listening to Curtis, I wonder, how might his students feel different if he led them to a place of authentic followership, a place where they do not feel threatened by his presence?

Curtis attempts to understand the way students react to him, though he acknowledges that he does not know who has a father at home and who doesn't. Curtis's interactions with his male students raise questions about what it means to be a Black male in the classroom. Lynn's (n.d.) summary of the literature on African American males in the classroom concludes that they are often considered "threatening and intimidating to teachers and parents. In general, because of the historic social arrangement of schools and societal expectations for Black men, they are still regarded as an unwanted presence in America's classroom" (p. 14). Yet, at the same time, programs like "Call Me MISTER," a teacher recruitment program out of Clemson University, attempt to diversify the teaching pool, selecting participants

from underserved and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. In doing so,

"Call Me MISTER" acknowledges the positive influence African American males

can have on the academic achievement of African American students.

Curtis's experience illustrates the complexity of identity in the classroom. Our

identity may present the greatest challenge to those who seem most similar to us.

Aoki (2005b) comments on the challenges bound within the concept of identity:

> The very concept of identity is the exemplary assertion of such an
> impossibly definitive meaning of and by the self: "I am *x*" or "She's the
> one." Identity is exactly the presumption that a person can be pinned to a
> unique and fundamental story….Identity, therefore, constitutes a radically
> "vertical" space of the subject, as if one's body, mind and soul were not
> only perfectly aligned, but also located in a very specific place on the map
> of the social world. (p. 445)

Can we, in fact, say definitively who we are? Can we determine who someone

else is? What do we lose in our attempts to reduce ourselves and others to discrete

categories that do not capture the overlapping and intertwining nature of our ways

of being in the world?

Elisabeth shares several experiences being *othered* by students during her first

year in school. Her encounters as an Asian American female with a student

population that is primarily African American are discussed in Chapter Four, but they

bear repeating: "When I first taught at Jefferson, a lot of kids would go like, Ching

chong, ching chong…They're like 'Don't mess with her. She'll beat you. She knows

that Kung Fu'" (Elisabeth). Elisabeth experiences being an outsider within her own

classroom; her race and ethnicity are completely new to her students, thus presenting

her as *other*. When they see her, they re-call the information they have on Asians and

Asian Americans, which is primarily based on stereotypes. But Elisabeth finds that

over time, the students learn that she is not so different from them:

> I definitely think the students that have had one of the Asian American
> teachers talk about Asian Americans or Asians in general more
> respectfully. I think that when they see an Asian American, they don't
> assume that they're Chinese. I hear kids correcting one another, like, that's
> not a Chinese person, that's an Asian person. (Elisabeth)

By engaging with the *other* the students come to understand who Elisabeth is as a

person instead of as a series of labels.

The stories of my participants reveal hurtful *othering,* not only by students but

by fellow teachers, as well. How can we create a safe, trusting environment for our

students in schools when we cannot even trust our colleagues to see us for who we

are?

When Colleagues Other

Colleague is from the Latin *collega* meaning "partner in office." Colleague is

the combination of *com-* "with" and *leg-,* which is the stem of *legare* "to choose."

Together, these form the meaning, "one chosen to work with another." Adriana chose

her current school very carefully. Having been fired from her previous place of

employement for being perceived as a lesbian, she intentionally sought an accepting

school environment with a social justice mission. That said, however, Adriana is not

immune from *othering* at her present school. For Adriana, *othering* occurs in some

instances around her age.

> One of the things that really bugs me [at school] is my age. For 30 I've
> done a lot of sh--. I've written a book, I've written chapters in other books,
> I've presented at NAIS, the national conference, I've presided at AIMS.
> I've done a lot but I feel like I don't necessarily get the recognition for it
> because I'm 30….There was an incident here where…I'm the recycling
> Nazi, and people were putting their coffee creamer things in the

recycling…So, I'm going off in our staff meeting and someone comes behind me and literally pulls me off as I'm talking. And I'm like, if someone were 50, that would never happen. No one would ever do that to the faculty members who were 50 or above.

As a young looking female who has been patted on the head on two occasions by the president of my organization, I can *feel* Adriana's frustration. In fact, when treated differently in the workplace because of my age and gender, I often respond by asking myself if my 50 year-old male colleagues would have been treated the same way. Generally, my determination is no, they would not.

Adriana's and my experience around age illustrate one side of the duality within ageism. In certain contexts, society values a younger appearance, but in others it is the wise sage, usually an older person, who garners respect. In teaching, society seems to have a set notion of the perfect age, not too young and not too old. Young, or new, teachers are considered inexperienced, but older teachers with 30 years of experience or more, are often encouraged to retire, regardless of their effectiveness in the classroom or their connection to students' lives and realities. What does age signify?

Jardine et al. (2003) question society's linear notion of development, opening up how we think about the relationship between young and old. While their discussion is geared toward the teacher-student relationship, insight can be gleaned for the relationship between any individuals of different generations:

> What if we were to give up picturing "development" as a line in which one stage is replaced by another, in which one is more precious than the other, where we must somehow make a moral choice between youth and age and the tales each might tell? What if we were to imagine "development" as an open field of relations, in which each voice, each tale, each breath requires all the others, all its relations, to be full and rich and whole and healthy and sane?…So that, in fact the old never replace the young but live *with*

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them, so that one does not fulfill any destiny in aging, but simply becomes who one becomes, generous or not, able to live well with all the voices of the Earth, or unable, disabled, desperate. (pp. 146-147)

Jardine et al. remove the significance that we attribute to chronological age and ask us instead to hear one an*other* as human beings, each with singular stories to share. They ask us to be mindful not to become set in the notion that with wisdom comes age, because, in fact, we all have powerful experiences to relate, regardless of our age.

As educators who teach for transformation, we must remember that learning is a lifelong process and the most engaging teachers are those who desire to learn from their students, fully participating in the educational process. I return, then, to my earlier question: What, then, authorizes us to teach? Is it years of experience in the classroom? Remembering Aoki's phrase "authentic followership" and reflecting back on my "experienced" teachers who left me muddled and confused in the classroom, I look beyond a teacher's age in considering what authorizes her or him to engage with students.

While society seems to eschew the notion that aging is beautiful, my experience leads me to question if looking young is actually that desirable. Is it bad to look young? People older than me frequently respond to my frustration at how I am treated for looking ten years younger than I am by saying, "One day you'll be happy you look young." Such a response only adds to my aggravation by dismissing the consequences and implications of the mistreatment. The problem is that people's perceptions affect their actions. Just as Daniel is dismissed as an "assistant" by students, Adriana is undervalued by her colleagues.

> If someone describes something that I'm doing as "cute" one more time…It's just stupid stuff, I've worked with teachers on national boards across the country on character education and moral development and I'm sitting right here in your school and people are forming committees about moral development and character education. No one has asked me to do anything and I've even come to them and said, "I can help you if you want" and nothing. (Adriana)

What does it mean to be "cute" in a professional setting? As I discussed in Chapter Four, language carries tremendous power. Cute is often used to describe children and small animals. Such language carries the power to invalidate both Adriana's years of experience teaching and her many professional achievements. She is left unable to contribute her knowledge because she is not invited to be a "partner" in the conversation. And further, the language that is used leaves her feeling "less than." Adriana has recently decided to pursue a Master's degree as a way of gaining credibility among her professional peers. But should she have to "prove" herself in this way? Peer is from the Latin *par* meaning equal. Is Adriana equal to her colleagues when she is referred to as cute and when her accomplishments are ignored?

Adriana wishes to be treated as a colleague, as a valued member of the teaching staff. She wants to interact with *others* on topics about which she has substantial knowledge. Lord's (1994) notion of critical colleagueship emphasizes the importance of teachers raising questions and concerns about how best to reach their students. It involves adapting a critical eye that confronts traditional practice for the purpose of transformation and revision. Critical colleagueship includes creating disequilibrium through self-reflection, collegial dialogue, and on-going critique; embracing an openness to new ideas; and increasing one's capacity for empathetic understanding of

colleagues' dilemmas. It is, in essence, a process of engaging in conversations that involve constructive criticism regarding classroom practices. Critical colleagueship values learning from the experience of *others* and understanding the multiple perspectives that exist on any given issue. The goal of such conversations is not to find consensus, but to engage in an authentic, honest, and open sharing of ideas for the purpose of progressing our understanding of the topic. Applebee (1996) explains this concept of conversation further: "Disagreement, divergent interpretations, alternative viewpoints should require participants to clarify and extend their own insights rather than capitulate to someone else's view" (p. 115).

Engaging with colleagues.

What does it mean to engage in conversation? Grundy (1987) brings us back to ancient Greece and the process of democracy in relating conversation to classroom practice.

> So the desirable outcome of any political decision was a state of being, not a particular result of some kind…The notion of deliberation producing a state of being rather than some final result is illustrated by the tradition that deliberations were never closed…it was considered that understanding was achieved only by deliberation and debate through which the meaning of a situation or event became clear. (Grundy, pp. 64-65)

Grundy does not deny that decision follows from deliberation, but she loosely associates them, emphasizing the process over the result, which serves to refocus our intentions in the school setting.

Conversation is a relational endeavor, and requires an openness to the *other*. Gadamer (2001) writes:

> Language is a *we* in that we are assigned our place in relation to each other, and in which the individual has no fixed borders. This means,

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however, that we all must overstep our own personal borders/limits of understanding in order to understand. This is what happens in the living exchange of conversation [*Gesprach*]. All living together in community is living together in language, and language exists only in conversation. (p. 56)

Conversation is about stretching ourselves, expanding our understandings by engaging with one an*other* in ways that inform our own perceptions. We converse as a way of listening to one an*other* and taking in an*other*'s perspectives, but for the purpose of reflecting on our own understandings. How are our understandings limited? How is our personal growth stunted when we only include certain voices in the conversation?

How can Adriana work with *others* to find solutions and new directions for the classroom when she is not included in the conversation? What critique remains silent when only certain voices are raised? In what ways does the teaching staff suffer, and consequently how do the students suffer, by ignoring the voices of younger teachers? And what happens to Adriana's motivation to be part of the teaching staff each time she is silenced, each time she is referred to as "cute," and each time her offers to help are ignored?

What does it mean to listen in the school context? Schultz (2003) defines listening as "an active, relational, and interpretive process that is focused on making meaning" (p. 8). Schultz ties listening to action. Listening is about being in relationship with an*other* and through this relationship, working toward change: "By listening to others, the listener is called on to respond" (p. 9). Levin (1989), too, connects our listening and the way we in which we engage with the world:

What kind of society does our listening need? What kind of society do we need in order to feel that we have been adequately and fairly heard? What

kind of dialogical process does the process of listening itself need? What moral claims can be made, if any, on the listening capacities of others? What moral duties, if any, attend the *capacity* to listen? (p. 136)

Our listening, then, is about being socially responsible for what we take in and for the relationship that is formed through listening to the *other* and being heard.

Rich (1986) captures the anguish students can feel when they are not heard in the classroom:

When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female, or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing? (p. 199).

How dehumanizing such moments must be. For Schultz (2003), listening provides a space where teachers can attend to the acts of silencing that occur in the classroom: "[Listening] suggests how a teacher attends to individuals, the classroom as a group, the broader social context, and, cutting across all of these, to silence and acts of silencing" (p. 8).

Like Applebee, Shultz advocates engaging in conversations in the classroom—conversations that connect to students' lives. Through conversation, the teacher has the occasion to listen and to learn, and the students have the opportunity to be heard. The classroom, enacted as such, becomes a place "in which individual voices are joined to form a whole whose strength lies in its honoring of diversity" (Shultz, 2003, p. 43). Conversation in the classroom also provides a mechanism to address bias-related situations that may arise between students. Schultz comments that having a class conversation to address a particular issue emphasizes the collective

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responsibility of students "not only to monitor their own actions but to help their classmates learn to be members of the classroom community" (p. 61).

Listening is also a means through which we can identify and rectify silence among our students as well as acts of silencing by fellow students, teachers, and institutions. Schultz (2003) describes listening for silence:

> Listening for silence and acts of silencing is a critical and often overlooked aspect of teaching. Listening for silence includes listening for missing conversations and overlooked perspectives, and also listening for the moments when students are actively silenced by individuals and institutions. Listening for acts of silencing compels educators to notice and respond when students' talk and participation are eclipsed so that schools and classrooms, indeed all teaching interactions, can be fully representative of all students. (p. 109)

Listening for silence is a political act; it is an acknowledgement that dominant groups have a voice that silences *others* and it is a conscious effort to change that dynamic. Voice is tied to privilege and the ability, among the dominant group in society, to claim truth as theirs alone: "Dominant groups don't hold 'perspectives,' they hold 'Truth'" (Howard, 1999, p. 50). This truth is established and maintained through the privilege of voice, which accompanies the power to silence. Whether it is teachers or students who are silenced, acts of silencing have drastic consequences, severely hampering our efforts to develop community and an understanding of what it means to participate in a democracy.

Expectations of adult behavior: When are we old enough to "know better?"

At times my participants express surprise that the *othering* they experience comes from adults as opposed to students. Referring to the statement "Jews are very rich" made by an assistant teacher, which I discussed in Chapter Four, Daniel comments, "I expect that from a 14 or 15 year old. We're talking about an adult,

professional woman." Elisabeth has a similar reaction to being *othered* by a teacher.

As a new Teach For American (TFA) teacher in her school, Elisabeth encounters a

teacher who makes assumptions about her. She chooses not to respond to his

comment. She expects an adult to know better than to say something so judgmental.

> I feel like with kids I'm able to engage in conversation with them
> because in my head I'm able to understand why they might have
> whatever notions they have about people who are Chinese and people
> who are of Asian descent…. If it's a 40 year old adult, I'm less likely
> to engage in conversation just because of their age but now that I'm
> talking, maybe they haven't had experiences with Asian people
> either…I feel like once you're past the age of 23, I just expect you to
> have a common courtesy and not resort to stereotypes in thinking
> about groups of people. (Elisabeth)

Why 23? Elisabeth explains that by age 23 she assumes people have had enough

interactions with different groups to know that their stereotypes are wrong. But upon

reflecting further, she thinks maybe this is a common experience for people who go to

college but not for people who go to work right after high school. Can we expect

people to outgrow their assumptions? Are educated people less likely to *other*?

Prejudice is learned and can be unlearned, but how does the unlearning happen? Does

it happen through life experience, through contact with *other* groups?

It is often, though not always, less difficult to hold biases against people we

know. In establishing relationships with our students, we come to see them beyond

cultural stereotypes, beyond expectations established by research. We come to know

them as individuals and as members of multiple communities. Contact theory

maintains that "Prejudice…may be reduced by equal status contact between majority

and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals" (Allport, 1954/1979, p. 281),

but "contact must reach below the surface in order to be effective in altering

prejudice" (p. 276). Additionally, in his foundational work Allport observes that the different groups must engage in cooperative interaction: "Only the type of contact that leads people to *do* things together is likely to result in changed attitudes" (p. 277). How well do we know our students who differ from us? Do we get below the water line of the "diversity iceberg" to learn about that which we cannot see above the surface? And how do we encourage our students to get to know one an*other*? Do we allow them to self-segregate in the classroom based on their identity? Do we create opportunities for them to work cooperatively in ways that encourage them to share the stories of who they are? Do we create possibilities for students to engage fully with one an*other*, so they can learn about themselves as well as the *other*?

Daniel questions whether he should split up the group of African American female students who sit together in one of his classes.

> I have five African American young ladies in this class. I stand up here, I am usually in one spot [by the computer] except when they're working and then I'm everywhere. But my five African American females sit right here [in front, to his left]. And I almost wonder am I, by not making them go sit among other people, am I saying "Here's where the Black kids sit." I worry am I doing something to make that happen…. If you walked in my room, you would notice it right away…. And it's not intentional, but if someone walked in and saw that, you would notice it…If it was five Goth kids sitting up front, I wouldn't say anything.

Should Daniel break the group of African American females up when his policy is that students can choose where they want to sit? He acknowledges that he would not say anything if a group of Goth students was sitting together. Can we reach a level of comfort with students wanting to sit with people of their own race?

In order to get beyond questions like "Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" (Tatum, 1997, p. 52), we need to understand identity

development in adolescence. Tatum explains this process: as children reach puberty, they begin to ask "Who am I?" in new ways, including "Who am I racially/ethnically?" African American youth, in particular, think of themselves in terms of race because this is how the world sees them: "Our self-perceptions are shaped by the messages that we receive from those around us, and when young Black men and women enter adolescence, the racial content of those messages intensifies" (p. 54). According to Tatum, Black students want to sit with other Black students in part because of common experience. They are able to support one another in ways that students from other racial groups are not. In essence, sitting together in the cafeteria by race is not a problem. It is "a developmental process in response to an environmental stressor, racism…[It] is a positive coping strategy" (Tatum, p. 62). The question is, how can we address the stressor? What can we do to provide positive experiences for our students of different races, so their sense of self is not based on the stereotypes with which they are confronted on a daily basis? The work here needs to be done well before students reach the high school classroom, but there are still ways of engaging with students of different races that affirm who they are and create a trusting and safe classroom climate.

In what ways do we come alive through our lived experience with the *other* in the classroom? According to Buber (1947/1965), we can only develop as humans once we have learned to live in relation to one an*other*. Can we reduce our prejudice by meeting our students human to human and educating them to meet each *other* human to human? What if we have such exposure, broadening our horizons, but the messages we continue to receive from society overpower these encounters? I am

reminded of the incident that I described in Chapter One, in which I *othered* two

Roma men, clutching my bag as they passed me. Despite two years combating

stereotypes of Roma, I had internalized what I had heard over and over again. While I

was struggling to combat stereotypes, I was at the same time being socialized in the

ways of belonging to the superior race, a process which solidified certain ideas in my

head that were supported and reinforced by a system that benefits whites through

educational and employment opportunities. Shortly, we will hear Adriana's story in

which her father's stereotypes of Jews echo in her head as an adult even though as a

child she fought against his ideas on difference. Blumenfeld and Raymond (2000)

explain that stereotypes are self-perpetuating. Once they are in place, we tend to

notice instances that reinforce them and ignore the wealth of behavior that does not.

Harro (2000) links this process of internalizing and perpetuating bias to a lack

of action:

> To the extent that we fail to interrupt [the process of socialization] we
> keep the assumptions, the problems, and the oppression alive…. Many of
> us choose to do nothing because it is (for a while) easier to stay with what
> is familiar…. We fail to realize that we have become participants just by
> doing nothing. (p. 20)

Harro attributes inaction to a combination of fear, insecurity, ignorance, and

confusion, which we develop from the myths and misinformation we receive as

participants in society. As I discuss later, at times an incident occurs in our lives that

shakes us out of our complacency and compels us to work for change.

As long as the system remains unchallenged, we cannot expect adults to

"know better." When we begin to "question the givens, the assumptions of the

society, the norms, the values, the rules, the roles, and even the structures" (Harro,

2000, p. 21), we can begin to create change. Socialization is an ongoing process throughout our lives; it does not end when we reach a certain age. And the system remains as is until we tear it down. We are all socialized in the same way, receiving messages that affirm some groups and diminish *others*. No one is immune from this experience. Just as our adult colleagues *other*, so too, do the parents of our students.

Parents as Otherers

As social beings, parents bring assumptions and expectations of teachers' behavior with them, which on occasion become evident in school-based interactions. Curtis shares an experience in which his age was used by a parent as a way to excuse a child's behavior.

> I've had a couple of parents who were surprised when I was the teacher based on how young I look. I remember having a parent conference and the mother was basically insinuating that if I had been teaching urban for longer, I would know x, y, and z. Oooh, that burned me up because I was like, lady, I have been teaching almost as long as your son has been alive…at this school… (Curtis)

In this case, looking young was not a point of complement for Curtis in interacting with a parent whose son had "outrageous behavior." It was a tool used to invalidate Curtis's skill as a teacher. Again, it was not Curtis's age alone that created a problem, but the many assumptions accompanying the perception of his age. Here, young is equated with inexperience and inability to teach or a lack of knowledge.

> …she was…like, oh, you just don't know how to control my son because you're young and you're not used to dealing with urban kids….And the idea that I wasn't equipped to deal with her son who was responsible for outrageous behavior.…I mean, if the kid threatens me, that's just off the pale. It's not ok, and so regardless of how old I am or how long I've been teaching, why is it coming back to me when this is the behavior that your child is exhibiting? (Curtis)

Blaming Curtis for the student's problems is easier than looking at how to address the boy's behavior, for addressing the behavior might require that the mother assess her own role in the situation.

Blumenfeld and Raymond (2000) define scapegoating as "singling out of individuals or groups of people as targets of hostility even though they may have little or nothing to do with the evil for which they stand accused" (p. 24). They go on to explain the origin of the scapegoat, which goes back to the Book of Leviticus:

> On the Day of Atonement a live goat was selected by lot. The high priest placed both hands on the goat's head and confessed over it the sins of the people. In this way, the sins were symbolically transferred to the animal, which was then cast out into the wilderness. This process purged the people, for a time, of their feelings of guilt. (p. 24)

In Curtis's situation, the mother may release herself of any feelings of guilt or responsibility for her son's actions by blaming Curtis for the student's behavior, but blame does not lead any situation toward resolution, and in the blaming process, the child gets lost. What becomes of the student when the focus is on placing blame? In this incident a range of power struggles emerge. The student displays "outrageous behavior" and "threatens" the teacher, perhaps in attempt to gain power. The teacher, in labeling the behavior as "outrageous" and "threatening" exhibits the power to name and to act on such interpretations of behavior, which may be based on assumptions. And the mother struggles to gain power by blaming the teacher for the student's behavior. How can the outcome be improved by taking a power-with approach in which the teacher and mother both assume responsibility for the past and the future with regard to the student?

Claudia also experiences *othering* by a parent, in which notions of blame and power are present. She has a very negative encounter during a parent conference that leaves her in tears, bringing into question the notion that emotional display is a show of weakness.

> I had these difficulties with one student this year and his parents, particularly his father. And at a conference [the father] talked to me in a way that was so unbelievable. It had to be because of my gender. He obviously came in angry and said some things and so I tried to mirror back to him what he said. I said, "So, it sounds to me that you think that I have not met your son's needs and that you're blaming the school for some…" I didn't even finish the sentence, and he said, "Claudia, that strikes me as very immature. I'm startled by your immaturity." I mean if you're going to get me with a word that is really going to hurt me, it's immature…But the manner in which he was talking, in such a degrading way, I know that he wouldn't talk to me that way if [the head of the middle school] was next to me or if my husband was next to me…. I think I made it worse by crying. I actually got very teary about the way he was treating me, and then I felt upset because I may have perpetuated his feeling of seeing the weaker sex with emotions… (Claudia)

Like Curtis's experience, Claudia's is complex. By interpreting the father's thoughts as blaming, she may be placing her own assumptions on him, which may, in fact, contribute to his outrage. Regardless of what fueled his remarks, Claudia feels as though she has contributed to the sexist notion that displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.

The poet Rukeyser (1973) writes, "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open" (p. 377). The pervasiveness of sexism in our society was recently highlighted during the 2008 democratic presidential primary. In a bizarre paradox, Hillary Rodham Clinton was accused of being "…castrating, overbearing, and scary" (Carlson, mediamatters.org) and at the same time overly emotional. When she displayed emotion while giving a heartfelt

response to a question just before the New Hampshire primary, voices challenging her capacity as a presidential nominee reached a new high. Diana Owen, a professor at Georgetown University notes, "As far as being a female candidate, she's open to different descriptive adjectives—things like melting down or being too emotional—that you would not hear as much in terms of male candidates….[Crying] shows people weakness—crying goes against both male and female stereotypes, neither can do it" (as cited in Friedman, 2008).

Cole (1998) asks, "If you've seen one woman, have you seen them all?" (p. 63), thereby questioning the accepted notion that all woman eat, breathe, and think the same way, as captured by widespread stereotypes. Johnson (1999) refers to stereotypical representations as part of patriarchal culture, which "includes ideas about the nature of things, including men, women, and humanity, with manhood and masculinity most closely associated with being human and womanhood and femininity relegated to the marginal position of "other"…. It's about the social acceptability of anger, rage, and toughness in men but not in women…" (p. 85).

Claudia is *othered* for her display of weakness, but would it have been acceptable for her to show anger or toughness in her interaction with the father? The notion of female weakness is further captured in sexist language which prevents women from having a voice: "The language of sexism not only portrays women as nonserious, as trivial, and as the 'second sex,' but it also contributes to her invisibility" (Bosmajian, 1995, p. 391). What would the world look like if women had a voice and a presence among the chair*men* and spokes*men* of the world? Can we re-

envision Claudia's interaction with the father in way that is unencumbered by society's interpretation of her behavior along sexist lines?

While acknowledging that as a group, men are dominant in society and hold power, Kimmel (2000) questions the extent to which men *feel* powerful at the individual level.

> Men's feelings are not the feelings of the powerful, but of those who see themselves as powerless…. When confronted with the analysis that men have all the power, many men react incredulously…."What are you talking about? My wife bosses me around. My kids boss me around. My boss bosses me around. I have no power at all!…Our imperfect analysis of our own situation leads us to believe that we men need more power, rather than leading us to support feminists' efforts to rearrange power relationships along more equitable lines. (pp. 217-218)

Kimmel argues that men feel powerless because the rules of manhood have become so limiting. Men feel disempowered because of their fear of emasculation by other men. Sadly, efforts to claim individual male power tend to ignore the collective social power they exert over women and the privileges from which they benefit, regardless of their perceived lack of individual power.

Was the father in Claudia's meeting attempting to claim individual power? Did he feel threatened by the authority that the school, and by association Claudia, represents? What does school represent for parents? And what place do parents have in questioning their child's engagement in the classroom? The relationship between parents and teachers in Claudia's school is atypical, as she works in a private school. Do parents feel an added sense of entitlement when they pay $25,000 a year for their child's education? Should their money give them additional power? The teacher-parent power relationship can become inverted when issues of class are so evident. At Claudia's school an unhappy family can leave and choose to go elsewhere, taking

their $25,000 with them. In Curtis's school context, this is less likely. In many public

school districts around Curtis and Claudia, students must attend the school to which

they are assigned. Parents have little opportunity to exercise power by walking away.

The teacher-parent relationship can be rife with tension. Parents feel an innate

need to protect their children and look out for their best interests. But so do good

teachers. A good teacher always has a child's best interests at heart. If parents can

trust that teachers have the same desires for their children as they do, perhaps they

can achieve a power-with relationship that allows them to put the child first.

But power-with relationships are difficult to attain when individual

perspectives of the *other* are shaped by social influences. Claudia observed that

during the entire meeting the mother sat silently: "She had her head down the whole

time and didn't say anything" (Claudia). Claudia also commented that in the past,

when the father has spoken with the head of the middle school, who is male, his

interactions have not been insulting or aggressive. She, therefore, concludes that he

spoke to her in such a "degrading way" because she is a woman.

How can women find their place as authentic beings when every behavior is

defined in terms of their gender? Anton (2001) refers to authenticity as "the modern

'quest' for self-fulfillment, self-realization, or personal development" (p. 3).

Authenticity is based on the notion that "One must realize a potentiality which is

properly one's own" (p. 4), but this is not a process solely of the self, devoid of

dialogue and interaction with the *other*.

Can our female students achieve fulfillment and realization while being

referred to as "bitches," and can our male students develop their natural empathic,

sensitive ways of being while being called "sissies?" Is it possible to develop a sense

of self in a society that rejects one's purest, authentic being? What becomes of our

soul when we constantly strive for such self-realization only to find that it is

impossible to achieve in a society that limits what we can become and how we can

engage in the world?

Steinem (2000) maintains that change will come when the models children see

as they grow up change: "Children who grow up seeing nurturing men (and women)

and achieving women (and men) will no longer have to divide their human qualities

into 'masculine' or 'feminine.' Gender will no longer be the dominant/passive model

for race and class" (p. 257). What do we do as educators to ensure that our students

can truly *be* in the classroom? And how do we challenge both the socialization

process and the system through our daily interactions with our students?

The process of *othering* becomes complicated when the pain of our

experience as *other* leads us to cause pain for *others*. As I continue to explore the

phenomenon of *othering*, I learn from one of my participants what it is like to move

from *other* to *otherer* and I wonder how we can prevent this from happening.

Swimming in Circles: Caught in the Cycle of Hate

At times perceptions of us can, in turn, shape how we see *others*. In such

instances, we become the *otherer*, the shark circling its prey, sometimes intentionally,

other times subconsciously. Adriana shares a time at her school when being *othered*

brought forth some of her own biases. As a new teacher, Adriana was warned not to

talk about religion in her classes. She reflects on her confusion around this statement

and the concerns it raises for her as her biases and her history begin to surface.

When I first started here I remember somebody saying to me, "Don't bring up religion in your classes because we have a very high Jewish population in our school. It's gonna be a contentious issue. People are gonna freak out if you do." And the way it was said to me was sort of like a warning. I thought, is the reason why people are saying this to me because I came from a Catholic school where I taught religion, and so, are people looking at me like I'm the religion teacher, I'm Captain Catholic, which couldn't be further from the truth…. I then looked at Meadowland [pseudonym] as very narrow minded, almost anti-Christian, almost anti-Catholic, almost anti-religion in general. It's a secular school, but it seemed like there was no room for any discussion of spiritual or ethical component of kids' lives, which is also a facet of education. And it made it seem like, if you do that, you're going to upset the Jews.

Adriana explains her thought process at the time, sharing how the comments at school

brought back memories of her father's anti-Semitic statements growing up.

It upset me because…my dad's not racist, but he walks that line….When it comes to Black people and Jews and Asians, my dad doesn't hold back. I grew up with this really twisted way of hearing about other people and as a kid it really bothered me.

Adriana tries to make sense of the warning she receives about bringing up religion in

school, but when she can't, the ideas she heard from her father as a child begin to ring

in her ear.

So, when I got this whiff of "Well, don't talk about this stuff," I was like, what do you mean? And worse, it was like, don't talk about religion because we have a 40% population of Jews here. It was as if to say, that 40% makes all the decisions around here. And all of a sudden it was like an echo of what my dad was saying. So, I went to the head of school and [he said] you have to be careful that you're not going to proselytize. Where are people getting this idea that that's what I'm going to do? And I said to him, is it because I taught religion at [a Catholic school]? Do I make people nervous? And he said, "Well, maybe."

I could feel my own biases coming up…I could hear my dad saying things like, "Well there you go, going into a school where the Jews are going to tell you what to do."

Adriana bristles at the fact that assumptions are being made about how she

will handle conversations around religion. She disowns the label "Captain Catholic,"

though this is how she may be perceived. And consequently, in being judged, she begins to analyze the situation in terms of her own judgments. In processing her own discomfort at being *othered*, echoes of her father's anti-Semitism that she heard growing up, return to the fore. And while she acknowledges that these thoughts make her uncomfortable, they present themselves nonetheless. The messages from Adriana's father carry tremendous weight even though Adriana did not accept them as a child. And while they remain dormant for almost two decades, they resurface when Adriana finds herself needing to defend herself in the face of the *other*. The *other* has become *otherer*.

In Chapter Four, I described how Adriana's experiences as *other* empowered her to take a stand in the face of hate. Here, the situation is different. Adriana's colleagues treat her as *other* because of her background as a religion teacher in a Catholic school, and this in turn, surfaces latent anti-Semitic thoughts. Allport (1954/1979) describes how the latter situation can take place:

> Deprived of power and status one craves to feel power and status. Pecked at by those higher in the pecking order, one may, like a fowl in the barnyard, peck at those seen as weaker and lower than oneself, or as threatening. (p. 153)

Does Adriana feel stripped of her power by being *othered*? How is she disempowered by those who question her ability to teach effectively in a secular setting? And by finding excuses for the *othering* she feels, can Adriana then gain a renewed sense of power—the kind of power that comes from the belief that "it's not me, it's them?"

Allport (1954/1979) cites personal frustration and anger as the primary reasons for hostility toward *other* groups when *othered*. To give an example, he cites a Jewish student:

> I am intolerant because I have been a victim of intolerance during my early formative years. The hatreds and prejudices I have developed are reactions used as a defense mechanism. If Joe Doakes hates me I naturally will return the compliment. (as cited in Allport, p. 154)

Within this dynamic, Allport observes an interesting phenomenon: people who have been *othered* either feel high levels of prejudice or low levels. They seldom fall somewhere in between:

> In short, being a victim oneself disposes one either to develop aggression toward *or* sympathy with other out-groups….*Victimization can scarcely leave an individual with a merely normal amount of prejudice*….Either he will join the pecking order and treat others in the way he has been treated, or else he will consciously and deliberately avoid this temptation. With insight he will say, "These people are victims exactly as I am a victim. Better stand with them, not against them." (Allport, 1954/1979, p. 155)

This dichotomy is not as simple as it may seem, however. While people may acknowledge overt hatred for *other* groups, or they may completely disavow such feelings of hatred in the belief that we are all equal, the fact remains that we all have biases. Though we may articulate *othering* in terms of agree or disagree, right or wrong, we cannot escape the fact that even those among us who are ardent social justice advocates struggle on a daily basis to understand our own prejudices. The shades of gray constantly emerge.

Allport (1954/1979) attributes one's reactions to their level of personality development. Personalities marked by sympathy, courage, persistence, and dignity, which he refers to as "tolerant personalities," are more likely to be compassionate toward oppressed people. Similarly, Saenger (1953) connects personality traits and *othering*. Saenger's language differs, referring to authoritarian and democratic personalities, but his ideas are similar to Allport's:

The authoritarian personality is predisposed to prejudice. Such predisposition originates in his failure to recognize the basic equality of men regardless of their station in life, and his need to feel superior to at least some people as well as his inability to feel affection and sympathy. (p. 125)

Elkehammar, Akrami, Gylje, and Zakrisson (2004) found in their research of the Big Five personality factors (openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism) that openness to experience and agreeableness were negatively related to prejudice. They observe that their findings are not surprising, as openness to experience includes components that have to do with nonconformity and "has been shown to be positively related to liberal and social political values…. In the same way, agreeableness, as the opposite of antagonism, includes components such as tendermindedness as well as nonhostility, empathy, and prosocial behaviour which could be expected to relate negatively to prejudice as well" (p. 477). In other research, Akrami (2005) cautions against considering only one theoretical approach to prejudice. He proposes an integrated approach including personality, cognition, and social psychology theories.

Adriana's experiences show that different contexts bring forth different ways of thinking about and engaging around *othering*. We may be able to point to an *ideal* personality that feels sympathy and empathy, but is it possible to expect anyone to act in such a way at all times? Both Allport and Saenger acknowledge that prejudice and discrimination do not arise from the personality alone; they stem from and are reinforced by social structures and systems of privilege.

From Adriana, I learn about the power of the echo to reverberate long after the initial words have been said. Her adult personality may be one of compassion and

passion for social justice, but her history is one of exposure to deep prejudices—

prejudices that die hard. What do we do with our echoes? Do we ignore them by

stuffing our ears with cotton, hoping they will go away? Do we contemplate their

meaning, allowing us to remove the battery that keeps the ringing alive? Awareness

of our biases is a constant process and it is Adriana's unique reflective capacity that

allows her to question the echo as it rings, thinking about what it means and how it

might shape her interactions at school. The echo never disappears, but the extent to

which it drives our thoughts and behaviors changes as our understanding of difference

grows. This awareness is the essential first step in unlearning prejudice.

In this section I have explored the consequences of socialization and a system

of oppression in the lives and experiences of my participants as they interact in the

school context. As members of society, these same participants tend to view their

students through the lenses formed by their process of socialization. What does this

mean for the lives of our students?

Swimming Through the Fog: Blinded By our Biases

As much as we might like to see our students as blank slates, we cannot ignore

the social identities they carry and how we have been socialized to view them. How

do our assumptions shape what we do or do not do in our classroom? In this section I

explore several ideas that surfaced in my conversations with teachers around the

notion that teachers are social beings who bring their process of socialization into the

classroom. I question what happens when we become blind to the diversity among

our students or to their experiences around difference. I also wonder what it means

for teachers when they label students before they even meet them, as is the case with

my participants who teach special education. And I borrow the words of my

participants to help me understand what it means for students when we claim that our

biases do not affect our teaching.

Seeing/Knowing the Diversity Within the Group

What happens when we assume that our students' experiences are like ours

because we look the same? When Curtis first starts teaching as a Teach for America

volunteer, he finds that he cannot completely relate to his students who are African

American.

> They sent me to Sparta, GA where the highest source of income was
> public assistance and most of my students lived in trailer homes…. I
> remember whenever I was using "we" in the sense of African Americans
> or the African Americans in that room, it didn't sit right with me because
> our experiences were so different and to say that we had this kinship
> because of the color of our skin was sort of misleading and I didn't know
> how to articulate all of that at the time. I mean I certainly was in the
> position to say "Look guys hold on a minute. I'm the middle class Black
> person here and you guys are the low income Blacks and let's make some
> distinctions here".… I don't want to say that I felt superior to my students
> but I did feel like we had different perspectives and that some of it just got
> squashed into "Oh, well, we're all Black." (Curtis)

Curtis feels the need to address the differences between his students and

himself. He is critically aware of these differences and feels discomfort when

they are ignored. These differences underscore a power differential in the

classroom that stems not only from Curtis's role as the teacher but also from

his place of privilege in terms of class.

Foster (1995) identifies kinship and connectedness as a characteristic of

African American teachers' pedagogy. Teachers express kinship, for example, by

relating experiences in overcoming racism. But is it fair to say that African American

teachers feel kinship with their students based on the color of their skin? Can we talk

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about shared experience if we only look at one aspect of our identity? The theory of intersectionality tells us that we must look at individuals in their multiple identities. Curtis's life experiences as an African American are shaped by his upper middle class background and his gender, as well. We cannot necessarily distill his experiences and characterize them as race, class, or gender discrimination, because when we encounter Curtis, we see an affluent, African American, male. He is, at once, the intersection of various identities. Curtis reflects on how his class has shaped his opportunities:

> When I got down to Sparta and realized that I learned to be a half decent writer in high school and my students were nowhere near that…I thought, Gosh, I was really lucky to have gone to the school that I went to because none of my students are going to be able to get into the kinds of schools that are going to turn them into better writers. So, they're kind of screwed right off the top. (Curtis)

For Curtis, to see only his race is to deny the vastly different educational experiences and opportunities he received in comparison to what his students in Sparta will receive. Can he, therefore, express "we" with an authentic voice?

When we have students who look like us, do we speak for them? Do we assume we know what they have to say because of what we see on the outside? Whether our students look like us or not, we must get to know them as they are, not as we see them. What stories remain silent, what richness remains hidden when we focus on what we think we have in common?

Seeing and knowing the diversity in a group does not consist solely of identifying an individual's race, class, gender, or ethnicity. It is about knowing what a student's identity means to her or him. What does it mean for our students when what

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we think does not match how they feel? Claudia explains how a student reacts at the possibility of the school hiring someone who looks like him.

> Tariq got so excited…He's Middle Eastern…We had a science teacher apply to the school and she's Muslim and she was wonderful. Tariq was so interested in where she was from and his eyes were bright and he was so excited to maybe have someone else that looks like him or that he's familiar with. That was interesting. As it is, it just seems to me that everybody just blends and it's not an issue, it's a non-issue.

Do we know that it's a non-issue for those who do not fit the mold? What may seem like a non-issue in terms of how people are treated may actually be a very real issue in terms of how people feel. What are our students who differ from us thinking? Tariq might not intentionally be treated like an outsider, but he might *feel* like an outsider. What assumptions does Claudia make about how Tariq feels in his identity at school, and how do these assumptions shape his schooling experience? And what power and privilege are at play when a white teacher expresses that "everybody just blends…it's a non-issue?" Howard (1999) describes one of the privileges of whiteness as the ability "not to know, not to see, and not to act" (p. 61). What does Claudia not see because of her whiteness? And how does not seeing relieve her of the responsibility to act? Ignorance is a tremendous luxury. By not seeing or not being aware, we do not have to claim responsibility for the *other*. But such luxury is very costly, for in not feeling the claim of the *other*, as individuals and as a society, we pay a heavy price.

> Curtis similarly operates under certain assumptions regarding differences in the school.

> Maybe I've made some assumptions about the level of acceptance of difference that I think there should be at our school and maybe I don't need to do certain things that I might feel the need to do if I were teaching [somewhere less diverse].

How can we know how our students feel about their identity if we do not ask them? What does their silence represent: happiness, complicity, frustration? Curtis acknowledges that he might teach differently if he felt there was less acceptance of differences in his classroom. What opportunities to reach out to his students does he miss by not engaging in direct conversations around identity and difference?

On occasion we make assumptions about our students based on what we see, but in some cases we are given information before we even meet our students, which adds yet another lens to how we view and interact with them. In the case of special education teachers, they are presented labels for their students that carry assumptions with them. Two of my participants share their experiences interacting with students who come to them bearing labels.

Labeling Students Before we See Them

How are schools set up in ways that prevent us from engaging with our students as unique individuals? Both Daniel and Elisabeth explore their interactions with their special education students and consider how they have *othered* these students. Daniel explains the process, as a special education teacher, of receiving a new student:

> I have a new student [who has autism] this year in my social skills class. You get his bio, you get his folder and you read all that before you ever meet the kid. So, I'm immediately like he's going to be like this….I think sometimes we hear "kids with disability" and special ed teachers will immediately go back to the one that you new most recently with the same diagnosis and you're like, he's going to be like that. He's not. But I definitely went in with this pre-conceived…ok, this is how I'll handle this kid because this is what he's going to do. [With] special ed kids…we're set up to read their case load and say, all right well, this one must be crazy and this one's probably a truant and you just do. (Daniel)

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Elisabeth similarly reflects on the challenges of knowing your students' labels before

you've had a chance to interact with them.

> Working as a special educator, I work with kids who are labeled mentally
> retarded, learning disabled, or emotionally disturbed (ED)…I think when a
> kid who's IEP (individual education plan) says they're ED and they act
> out, I find myself being more cautious around them and I guess that would
> be part of I have different expectations.

Elisabeth's expectations and behavior are built around her students' label as ED. But

does every child labeled ED act and react in the same way?

Buscaglia (1982) describes the limits of labels: "All you have to do is hear a

label and you think you know everything about them. No one ever bothers to say,

'Does he cry? Does he feel? Does he understand? Does he have hopes?'" (p. 23).

Buscaglia describes labels as words that are created with the intention of freeing us,

but which, in the end, trap us. He continues:

> Those of use who are interested in Special Education know these damn
> labels. We call children mentally retarded. What does that tell us? I have
> never seen a mentally retarded child. I've only seen children, all different.
> We call them students and, therefore, we think we can stand in front of a
> classroom and teach them all in the same way. *Labels*. The loving
> individual frees himself from labels. He says, "No more." (p. 25)

The challenge is to "rule words and not allow words to rule you. You will tell

yourself what this word means only after you find out by experiences what it means;

not be believing what people have told you it means" (p. 23). What power do we

inadvertently give language when we accept the meaning that *others* have

established? Can we re-claim words in ways that re-shape how we see our students?

Gadamer (1975/1989) writes, "You understand a language by living it" (p.

386). If we live a language, if we rely on our own unique experiences to inform our

understanding, can we rid ourselves of preconceived notions? Can we create our own

meaning, and might such meaning change our interactions with students? Would we be able to meet them human to human, instead of meeting them with institutional assumptions? Gadamer explains further: "Every interpretation includes the possibility of a relationship with others" (p. 399). Our interpretations of words that become labels can either make or break our relationships with our students.

Daniel shares labels he uses with students outside of his classroom. He uses humor in his explanation as a way of indicating his own understanding that his labels are laden with assumptions.

> I think every kid that comes to school who is a boy and I have to tell him
> to pull his pants up over his a-- is a delinquent. I just do. And I'm not even
> joking. He is probably a troublemaker of some kind. It's a stereotype
> that's true and I'll stick to my guns on that one (laughs).

In this instance Daniel refers to students he sees in the hallway, not students in his class. He does not have the opportunity to get to know the majority of males that fall into the category of wearing pants below their underwear. He sees them for just a moment in the hall and asks them to pull up their pants. He has limited interaction with these students, but what opportunities for a positive relationship are missed when this interaction is fueled by the label "troublemaker." What happens when the student he sees in the hallway, whom he has labeled as a troublemaker, then becomes a student in his class the next semester? How has their relationship been permanently marred?

When the mechanism for preparing new teachers and educating our students is set up to inform us about labels, and with the expectation that these labels will help us understand our students and teach them better, how can we learn to create our own

meanings? This is a necessary but formidable task that I will address further in Chapter Six as I consider implications for my research.

When we do not fully understand who our students are, we might fall into the trap of making assumptions about how they feel in the school environment. Students do not always express verbally or show nonverbally how they experience life in schools. Is it fair for us to assume that silence represents comfort?

When students talk…

Sydney, an African American female junior in an anti-bias workshop, shares her discomfort with an assignment she and her classmates were asked to complete on slavery. The task for students was to assume the role of a missing slave and to write an advertisement describing themselves so their slave owner could find them. The assignment made her uncomfortable, but she said what troubled her most was that the teacher, in giving an example of the assignment, tried to use humor in the advertisement. Sadly, the student did not address her concern with the teacher or her parents.

What role does humor serve when dealing with a serious topic, such as slavery? Humor can add levity to a heavy discussion, but what does this levity suggest? Is the message that the topic does not carry with it very real, visceral pain? Is the message that those feeling such pain should "get over it" since slavery happened so long ago? Is the humor an attempt to cover one's own discomfort with the topic? Humor carries with it strong messages and these messages resonate for students long after the laughing stops. There is a role for humor in serious

discussions. There is value in learning to laugh at oneself. But humor that disengages and marginalizes even one student has no place in the classroom.

Both students and teachers bring baggage into the classroom. How can we begin to unpack this baggage if we do not even know the contents of our suitcase? In our discussion of the incident, Sydney shares that she does not think the teacher intended to be offensive. Regardless of the teacher's intent, however, Sydney felt isolated and uncomfortable in class. Tragic historical events like slavery are never easy to address in class. But when a teacher attempts to do so without first contemplating notions of white privilege and ways in which power and authority in the classroom can create distance between the student and teacher, the learning process becomes fractured.

In the same workshop, Sydney's friend Joelle comments on her experience discussing slavery in social studies class, noting that she gets uncomfortable because everyone looks at her, since she is the sole African American in the classroom. In my conversation with Claudia about race in her school, she recalls a similar incident.

> I remember from way back in my past, I had to talk about slavery and I only had one Black student and she actually said to me that it feels like everybody looks at her when we talk about slaves. I remember thinking, do I not talk about slavery? Don't look at Gabby, you're talking about slavery. I don't remember how I handled it, I just remember that she brought it to my consciousness. (Claudia)

Claudia's experience highlights our need to be thinking about interactions around race, class, and gender before we engage in conversation with our students, so that such conversations do not damage the classroom community. By processing our own thoughts and experiences around power and privilege in society, we can become

better prepared to help our students understand how atrocities like slavery affect every one of us as members of a pluralistic society.

A diversity workshop provided a safe space for Sydney and Joelle to raise their discomfort and concerns. In doing so, they raised a critical awareness on the part of their peers who are not of African descent and who participated in the exercise, and subsequent conversation around slavery, without a second thought. What would Sydney's and Joelle's classroom experience be like if teachers were in touch with and mindful of their students' concerns? This process might result in more planning and preparation for teachers, but the ends significantly outweigh the means. Is it not an educational goal to reach all of our students?

Imaginative engagement.

Jardine et al. (2003) expand my questioning on difference:

> What can happen in schools when teachers take seriously the power and the right of children to name and to shape their experience in the world? And what does imaginative engagement have to do with that power and right? (p. 94)

> When we speak of imaginative engagement, we mean the kind of engagement that invites children most fully, most generously, into the club of knowers; not at some unspecified time in the future when they are grown up and able to use their knowledge, but today and each and every day they spend with us. (p. 22)

As members of the club of knowers, teachers can learn from their students just as students can learn from teachers. This mutual learning is what enhances the classroom experience for students and avoids the traditional, unilateral creation of meaning by the teacher/authority.

How do we define difference when we see it in the classroom? Do we see Sydney as someone to be incorporated in the curriculum instead of "ignored" or

"dealt with"? Jardine et al. (2003) focus on the individual in the classroom in a way that views difference as something to be valued instead of something to be dealt with or managed. Their approach is as follows:

> We want to interrogate the very idea that difference can be merely "known" and thereby, if teachers and researchers are diligent enough, eradicated as a problem of practice, and we want to challenge what is, sometimes, education's neurotic compulsion (Evetts-Secker, 1994) to tame and understand the exotic "other." Instead, we believe, the intractable, irreducible differences of individuals can form the ground of true freedom… (pp. 41-42)

Why is it that difference is something that we have to put in our own terms? Why can't difference be beyond our scope of understanding, yet, at the same time be something we embrace? Why must we break difference down into its component parts?

In sharing a story about a student, Jardine et al. (2003) comment, "Whatever happens to him happens to us" (p. 52) capturing their view of difference. We are all part of a community regardless of who we are. We suffer the ramifications of our harmful actions toward those who are different from us. As a community, when the *other* hurts, we hurt. The sooner society realizes this, the closer we will be to living in solidarity with one an*other*, not just in proximity to one an*other*.

Sydney's story reveals that teacher's assumptions and biases do affect their teaching. But such a realization is hard to come by. In speaking with my participants, there is a chasm between exploring our biases and acknowledging how they affect our teaching.

How Do Our Biases Affect Our Teaching?

Three of my five participants expressed that they do not believe their biases affect their teaching practice. I question whether this is possible? Curtis acknowledges that it is difficult for him to see pregnant teens in his classroom: "In terms of *othering*, I felt a conscious discomfort about what to do about teen pregnancy and how to approach it." He continues, "I don't think I treat them differently. I wonder, do I have some lowered expectations?" He comments that his AP US History homework is not going to be a priority for a young mother whose child is up all night crying: "And that's a reality, and that's where the disappointment builds up because obviously taking care of a kid has to come first." With a small child at home Curtis can relate to his students' experience staying up late at night, coming to work (school) exhausted or having to leave work (school) to take the baby for a check-up. But his similar experience does not result in empathy. He understands their experience in that he is familiar with it himself, but he has not reached a level of understand*ing*. Knowing what his students are going through does not prevent him from being disappointed. And in that disappointment there is judgment. Do his students feel his judgment? Do they sense his disappointment, and if so, how does that shape their performance in school, their sense of comfort and trust in his classroom? Are Curtis's lowered expectations not an example of treating these students differently?

Daniel, who shared earlier how difficult it is for him to see males and females dressed inappropriately in school and not make judgments about their behavior

outside of school, maintains that his assumptions about their behavior do not affect

his teaching.

> I think I'm really good at being judgmental in my brain and not letting that
> animal loose on the world, because how do I not?…I know that I don't let
> it affect my teaching. I appreciate the diversity of the kids. I really do.

Daniel acknowledges that his judgments can be very damaging. "Letting that animal

loose on the world" might mean negatively influencing or even harming a student's

sense of self-worth, not to mention his or her performance in the classroom. But can

we be so sure that our judgments do not come through via our facial expressions or

via the attention we give some students over *others*?

In Claudia's case, the bias she must confront is presented to her by her

students. When accused by male students of favoring female students, Claudia

expresses how difficult it is to own her bias.

> I think you want to make excuses for yourself, and I want to be aware if
> I'm doing it but at the same time, I think I'm a fair person….My
> awareness of [favoring female students] has been heightened. I don't
> know if it's true or not, but I'd love to look at that about me more closely.

Can we truly leave our biases at the door? Our students' social identities remain with

them, as do the ways in which we see the world. And if our lenses are shaped by our

experiences, as well as the messages we have received throughout our lives about

others, is it realistic to think that we can view our students as anything but an

amalgamation of ideas put into our heads, which we may or may not question? Harro

(2000) comments that the socialization process is "*pervasive, consistent, circular,*

self-perpetuating, and often *invisible*" (p. 15). To see beyond these social identities, to

peel back the layers upon layers of assumptions and stereotypes, requires a shift in

how we perceive the world and our interaction with *others*. "We need to take a stand,

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reframe our understandings, question the status quo, and begin a critical

transformation that can break down this cycle of socialization" (Harro, p. 21). To do

so, we must be intensely honest with ourselves and reflect on the many ways in which

our biases can and, in many cases, do shape our interactions with students who differ

from us. Without such honesty, we cannot move forward.

Forming Relationships with Students

Daniel's tagline at the end of his e-mails carries a quote from John Comer:

"No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship" (as cited in Payne,

2008, ¶ 2). When I ask him why he chose this quote, he explains:

> …you have to be able to sympathize or empathize, one of the two, and
> they've got to see that. They've got to see that I've been unsuccessful or I
> just know what it's like for you to be unsuccessful now…. I try to let the
> kids see that I'm a person, and by doing that they don't just think, yeah
> that's my teacher. They feel like they know me. And we're not friends.
> They know that, too. Even if they don't like me…they still know that I am
> genuinely invested in them…. If you are going to learn something from
> me, then you have got to trust me, that I know what I'm talking about and
> that I want to help you. And to get them to feel that, there has to be some
> level of significant belief in one another. People tell you you have to build
> rapport with kids. It's more than rapport. I want them to actually think I
> genuinely care about them and whether they do well.

What does it mean to build rapport and how can such building limit the scope of our

interactions?

Rapport is from the French *rapporter*, dating back to 1530, meaning "to bring

back." Rapport as "relationship" dates back to 1661. In establishing a rapport with

students, what are we hoping to bring back? Are we hoping to re-claim a relationship

that exists between adults and young children, a relationship of hope, of care, and of

trust? Relationships can be superficial or very deep. What kind of rapport do we hope

to have with our students? Is the goal to achieve a cordial relationship in which

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communication and interaction occur easily in the classroom, or are we looking for something greater, as Daniel suggests? We can have rapport and still remain at a distance from one an*other*. But where true sharing occurs, the kind of sharing that requires deep trust, something beyond rapport has been achieved.

Daniel seeks a deeper engagement with his students. He ensures his students' well being by embracing and living the words of Comer. He shares who he is and he gets to know his students. He talks to them in the hallways, so they understand that he sees them as people, not just as students in his class.

Daniel's words are echoed in a story shared by June Aoki who recounts her last day of school, forced to leave because she was Japanese and lived in Canada during World War II.

> I was about to leave the schoolyard. Something called upon me to turn around for a last look. On the balcony of the school stood my teacher Mr. McNab, alone, watching us as if to keep guard over us in our departure. (as cited in Aoki, 2005d, p. 194)

Ted Aoki describes Mr. McNab's watching as a watchfulness, a demonstration of care for his students, "a watchfulness filled with a teacher's hope that wherever his students may be, wherever they may wander on this earth away from his presence, they are well and no harm will visit them" (p. 195). He continues, "Authentic teaching is watchfulness, a mindful watching overflowing from the good in the situation that the good teacher sees. In this sense, good teachers are more than they do; they are the teaching" (p. 196). Like Mr. McNab, Daniel watches over his students, communicating a concern for them that extends beyond the four walls of his classroom.

June describes the power of having a caring teacher: "Over all those years the memory of his watching stayed vividly with me. For me, the singular moment reflected his being as a teacher" (as cited in Aoki, 2005d, p. 195). What stays with our students when they leave our classroom? Do they remember how to solve a quadratic equation or do they remember the care and concern we exhibit for them as human beings?

Aoki (2005d) speaks of a teacher's presence with children: "This presence, if authentic, is being. I find that teaching so understood is attuned to the place where care dwells, a place of ingathering and belonging, where the indwelling of teachers and students is made possible by the presence of care that each has for the other" (p. 191). By seeking to be present with our students through relationships of care, we can achieve far more than rapport.

What does it mean to speak of diversity in our schools? Aoki (2005c) writes:

In the field of education, the endorsement of cultural diversity has become the cornerstone of multicultural education that flourishes in our school curricula as exotic studies of Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and so on, and as a heritage-day programs on multicultural days often celebrated in schools…. But such an imaginary that gives birth to the metaphor of community as diversity produces, in its seeming liberal openness and tolerance of other, a silent norm that both contains and constrains differences on the underside of diversity. (p. 307)

Aoki asks about the consequences of a notion like "unity in diversity," which often "permits diversity but masks differences" (p. 306). In reading Aoki, I return to my question in Chapter Four, asking: What does it mean to be a community? A community of what? Can we re-envision "community of diversity" to be "community of difference?" The answer depends on how we define and interpret what it means to be multicultural. As long as multiculturalism is translated and implemented in schools

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via a "heroes and holidays" approach, a community of diversity will be our upper limit. What do we gain from an area studies approach that allows us to see people as individuals within a frame of difference? What approach to curriculum will enable teachers to infuse our students' lives and experiences, both common and unique, in the classroom? And how can our actions in the classroom shape our current and future relationships with our students? In the next section, my participants share how they intervene when confronted with bias in their schools.

Seeing the Other and Throwing a Lifeline: Choosing to Intervene in the Classroom

> As a teacher [intervening] is important to me because…I don't want to lose a kid in my class and have them be done for the year, unsuccessful, because they feel ostracized, or left out, or alone….If they can't pass my class I want it to be because it's just too hard…I don't want it to be because they have withdrawn and shut themselves down because of something someone is saying or doing. (Daniel)

What does it mean to intervene? Intervene is from the Latin *intervenire* meaning "to come between, interrupt." What do we hope to interrupt through our intervention? In addressing biased behavior, do we hope to come between two people? One way of interrupting a person is to stop them from talking by making a comment or asking a question. Consequently, the speaker may or may not return to her or his original thought. In intervening in biased behavior, do we want the *otherer* to return to their act of bias following our interruption? We hope to create a permanent break, not in the relationship between the parties but in the words or actions that form the *othering*. We hope to create a gap, a permanent space which cannot be closed or sealed. We hope to disrupt the thinking of the *otherer* in a way that will lead her or him to question biases.

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Making Choices

If intervening is a choice, how do we know when to speak up and how can we

most effectively address *othering* in the classroom? Elisabeth explains that when she

has been *othered* by her students, she is more open to conversation on the topic than

when she is *othered* by adults.

> I do not engage in conversation with [adults]. I'll just get offended. I'll
> curse at them….When I first taught at Jefferson [pseudonym], a lot of kids
> would go, "Ching chong, ching chong" and that's when I would engage in
> conversation with them….When I'm with students, I'm more open to
> engaging in conversation with them because I do recognize that I'm the
> first Asian American person that they have true direct interactions with
> besides the people who work the carry out, and a lot of times that's what
> they assume. I get them to ask, how would you feel if somebody came up
> to you and was like "Are all Black people drug dealers?" and then they
> start thinking about it.

Elisabeth remembers making the conscious choice to intervene when she started

teaching at Jefferson.

> I would walk around the hall and the kids would be like "Oh, there's the
> carry out lady." And I remember being like, I can either let that go or I can
> talk about it, and I remember stopping and being like "What do you
> mean?"

Elisabeth chooses to draw on her own experience to help her students

understand concepts around *othering*. Her personal stories allow her to help her

students develop empathy, connecting to her experience in some way. Adriana tries to

connect her experience to that of her students when coming out to them, inviting them

to draw on their personal experiences:

> I said, "Has anyone felt like you've had something to hide or you have
> something you're hiding" and kids said "yeah" and I said, "Well, what
> does that feel like?" and kids explained. And I was like, "I've kind of felt
> like that for a while" and then I explained…"

Adriana hopes the students will be more receptive to her if they can relate to her

on an emotional level. Dewey (1938) speaks of the inherent value in teachers

relating their experiences to students:

> All human experience is ultimately social: that it involves contact and
> communication. The mature person, to put it in moral terms, has no right
> to withhold from the young on given occasions whatever capacity for
> sympathetic understanding his own experience has given him. (p. 38)

Our personal experiences serve as a vital bridge between abstract concepts and

student realities.

On the connection between empathy and addressing bias, Ferrucci (2006)

writes, "Empathy is the best means of improving any relationship….Empathy is what

is missing most, and what would most help resolve age-old, dangerous racial

problems and prejudices" (pp. 109-110). How do we develop empathy? Ferrucci

(2006) believes that we have to be familiar with our pain in order to relate to the pain

and suffering of *others*.

> If I deny my suffering, it is hard for me to identify with the pain of others.
> If I boast about it, I will see others as competitors and will not likely be
> sensitive to their problems. My own suffering is the grounds for empathy.
> (p. 117)

But to feel our pain and learn from it, we must first remember it. The challenge is to

keep ourselves from burying it because we know it hurts.

Nietzsche (1967) writes:

> Empathy with the souls of others is originally nothing moral, but a
> physiological susceptibility to suggestion…. One never communicates
> thoughts: one communicates movements, mimic signs, which we then
> trace back to thoughts. (p. 428)

Empathy is a quality we are born with. It is inherent in our being and is visible, as

Nietzsche writes, in infancy and as young children through our non-verbal ways of

communicating.

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How is compassion to be taught, asks Levin (1985). Can it be taught? As a mother of small children, I am fascinated by the emotional development of my son and daughter. As a toddler, I was captivated by my son Gabo's compassion and sensitivity toward *others*. Whenever Gabo saw someone crying, he approached them and looked at them to see if they were ok. This was the case whether the person crying was a friend at daycare or a stranger in the park. Before he could talk, he would look at me while pointing at them and I would explain that the person was sad. Once he began to speak, Gabo would say things like, "Pam sad" to describe his teacher or "Joseph ok" when his friend fell but was all right. When we talked to each other, he usually talked about things he remembered that related to other people's emotions and he repeated that someone was ok, long after they had hurt themselves. If he only focused on the pain, for example "Nico bumped his head," I would ask him if Nico was ok, and he would say yes.

Why does this fascinate me? Gabo is a very physically tough boy. He falls constantly but rarely cries. Gabo focuses not on his own pain but on others'—both physical and emotional. When I reflect on this, I am aware that I am much the same way, but this is not something he has learned at his age. This is who he is. Does he need to be taught compassion, or is he this way by nature? He certainly differs from his classmates, and all who know him refer to him as a "sensitive" boy. But where did this sensitivity come from, and will it change as he interacts more with adults? Will his encounters in society inform him that his sensitivity and empathy are not okay because he is male, or will they be nurtured and supported?

Gabo's empathy seems to emerge through physical communication. As Nietzsche posits, his empathy is not based on moral grounds; it is based on his ability to mimic the sadness he sees in *others*. Levin suggests, however, that adults can affect the development of compassion and morality:

> The ethical notion of uprightness and fallenness, together with their psychological correlates, pride and guilt, are existential understandings *grounded* in the child's experiencing of the step-by-step learning which is involved in the ability to stand up (right) and walk forward (into the future) without losing a basic balance, stumbling and falling…The adults' way of relating to the frustrations in these early situations will very subtly, but nonetheless significantly, influence the child's entire future development as a moral agent, a moral being. (p. 241)

Based on these notions, Gabo's personal traits could be affected by my responses to his behavior. Do I encourage him to express his concern and sadness for *others*? Do I ignore his statement, "Pam sad," or do I talk to him about this to ask why she is sad and assure him that she is all right. Each interaction I have affects the development of his sense of being-with-others. How do I hope he will be with *others*?

Levin (1985) believes compassion can be taught, not as a concept but as a lived experience taught through example.

> That kind of teaching works by virtue of an exemplary embodiment—an embodiment of virtue which *shows* it in its most visible *beauty*, *clarifies* it in its articulation of the *truth*, and *directly communicates its goodness* through the tangible power of feeling….Once the teacher has moved them to this experience of their natural 'intertwining,' she may, in a new phase of teaching, begin to help these children to find, within themselves (i.e., within their bodily felt sense of that very intertwining) a natural interdependency and kinship on the basis of which they can realize a powerful motivation- realize their need and longing- for the creating of relationships with others that would have, as their value, a mutually responsive, mutually communicative, and mutually concernful character. (pp. 238, 240)

If our being-with-*others* is based on these values from an early age, how does this affect the likelihood that we will move from target to perpetrator later in life? Levin's concept of moral education states that we are born with a valuing process but that this changes as we turn to adults to guide our moral judgment. He suggests learning through the body to develop a compassionate outward stance. This learning through physical experience, while difficult, is necessary, as examples of compassionate behavior are not enough. Through imitation, tactile experience, and awareness of the body, children can understand what compassion *feels* like.

Levin's (1985) exploration of what grounds us in this world provides additional insight into the experience of *othering*:

> What is the character of our relationship, in this modern epoch, to the presencing of Being as our 'ground,' our 'grounding'? The metaphysically determined relationship to the ground and its grounding is a relationship which reflects, and at the same time encourages, the nihilism, or loss of Being, that has long remained implicit in the technological standpoint of our Western civilization. It is becoming increasingly apparent that this standpoint, characterized by our 'need' to master the ground on which we stand and place its presence firmly under our command as an always available standing reserve (Bestand), locates us, not on firm ground, but on the edge of an abyss…And we are in the gravest danger of falling into the horror of its nihilism. (p. 303)

Does one's movement from target to perpetrator contribute to that being's nihilism, to the nihilism of an entire society? We are born with the capacity to feel love and to feel pain and to create circumstances in which *others* feel these emotions. By choosing to inflict pain we may be contributing to our own destruction. We may be inching toward our own abyss. Interestingly, individuals often use prejudice and discrimination to feel better about themselves. According to Cotton (1993), individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to denigrate *others*. By saying or doing something negative to someone else, an individual attempts to feel more secure

about him or herself. The paradox of this situation, however, is that the act of hurting *others* may have a graver consequence for one's own being.

Empathy can allow us to address our behavior as perpetrator and to understand the experience of being a target. But acknowledging our negative behaviors requires a leap, which according to Levin (1985), allows us the possibility of enjoying a grounding that will not leave us with nothing on which to stand. Such a *poetizing* movement may place individuals on a path away from their nihilism and may allow for the grounding of new ground. What happens when our students cannot tap into their empathy or sympathy? What shape does their interactions with *others* take?

Addressing Name Calling in the Classroom

Name-calling appears to be one of the most pervasive forms of *othering* that occurs in schools. While seemingly innocuous, name-calling can reach such levels of harassment that students are driven from school, seeking safety through home schooling or a new school. And as the Pyramid of Hate in Chapter Three illustrates, name-calling is just a stepping-stone, which, when left unaddressed, can escalate to more virulent forms of hate.

In their own way, each of my participants addresses name-calling in the classroom. But because of the pervasiveness of the phenomenon, they must make choices. Elisabeth explains some of her decisions about when to address name-calling among her students.

> …when it's fag, definitely, but when it's "no homo" then I'm like, I'll let
> that slide….I think when kids say words that are definitely derogatory.
> They say fag, they say dyke. Even the "N" word. It's not cool. We're in
> school. You don't use that.

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Elisabeth distinguishes between offensive words applied to oneself and offensive remarks directed toward *others*. For example, she chooses not to address "no homo" when students use this as a caveat to clarify that what they've said or done does not mean they are gay. But she addresses the situation when someone calls someone else a "fag." Are such distinctions helpful, or do they send the message that some forms of name-calling are okay? What happens to the notion of equity when "no homo" remains unaddressed?

> Like Elisabeth, Curtis chooses always to address "fag."

> I definitely put the faggot…that just doesn't fly. I mean, if that word comes out, I stop whatever I'm doing and just make it clear that I'm never going to hear that word again out of their mouth in my classroom…It's just not acceptable. It's just a hurtful word that's just not acceptable. And it's never used…I guess if I had a Queer person in my room…I don't think I've ever had that situation where there was an openly Queer person who was using it in a way that African Americans use the word N---er. I mean, so, whenever it's used, it's used by a heterosexual person, theoretically, who is trying to denigrate.

Elisabeth's school has a policy stating that the "N" word cannot be used. Curtis takes a different approach.

> You know, to be honest…I even let the word N---er slide now. If it's like a Latino kid calling another kid N---er, it's just like, well, this is the world we live in….I use the word with –er in historical context because it's a pointed word and I know that they're not expecting it to come out of my mouth…But almost every time I hear the students saying it, it's with the –a/-ah and they're talking to each other in some kind of affection and even though it annoys me, that's a battle I've decided to stop fighting.

Curtis's choice is consistent with the findings in Lynn's (2002) study of African American male teachers. Lynn observed that his participants had an understanding of "street culture" and used this to connect with students.

Children in these classrooms are expected to achieve. However, they are not expected to "leave the street at the door" in order to do so. Rather, "the street" becomes a rich resource from which these teachers draw to make the curriculum more relevant to the everyday lives of their students.

Having facilitated innumerable workshops for students and teachers in which the issue of using the "N" word comes up, I have heard quite a range of responses and reactions. I have heard both adults and students, both Black and white, express discomfort with the co-opted use of "N-a/ah" between friends. And I have heard both adults and students, both Black and white, explain the perspective that saying "N-a/ah" is an attempt to re-claim a word that has caused pain for centuries. And in re-claiming the word, they hope to disarm its intensity, reversing its meaning and claiming the power to define words for themselves. I have also heard African Americans express frustration when they hear white youth using "N-a/ah." Language, and the way it is used, is complex, carrying social and historical significance. Attempting to re-claim the "N" word, as the gay community has attempted to re-claim "Queer," is certainly a valid effort to address the power dynamics in society. However, what historical significance gets lost when language no longer reflects its original meaning? How do we ensure that our students have a sense of the pain and fear that the "N" word has caused so many people for generations? How do we keep those experiences alive when they may not be the experiences of our students?

While the participants in my study claim they do not intentionally prioritize certain incidents or language when thinking about what to address in the classroom, there seems to be a hierarchy. Words and phrases like "fag" or "that's gay" are fairly consistently addressed, and the "N" word is addressed by some. But what words and

phrases do we miss in creating this unintended hierarchy? What messages do we send about what is acceptable and what is not? Who decides what should be on the "list?" What power dynamics are at play in making this decision? And by focusing on addressing specific words and phrases are we simply putting a Band-aid on the greater problem of individual and systemic bias?

In terms of strategies used to address name-calling in the classroom, Elisabeth expresses some frustration that she cannot engage her students in a deep conversation around homophobia.

> I can engage effectively with them in conversations about race, and I think to a certain extent about religion, but I think when we're talking about sexual orientation and kids make overtly homophobic statements, I feel like the level of engagement in our conversation is not that deep. Because with them I'm like it's not right for you to discriminate against gays and lesbians and they're like, why? I'm like it's just not right and I can't go beyond that besides [the fact] that I have friends who are LGBT and you probably have teachers who are LGBT and it's not right. I feel like because I don't draw on personal experiences or have personal stories to share with them, it's not able to hit the kids, like when I'm describing how I feel when someone calls me a chink on the street. Because of that I think it's harder to get to the kids. I think you're just telling them "this is how it should be."

By establishing the classroom as a place for respectful engagement around difficult topics, we can open a space where students can begin to question their own thoughts and opinions. While Elisabeth likes to bring her own experience into the classroom, she points out that she cannot reflect the experiences of all groups, so what then? If we re-envision the educational space as a place of care, we can challenge our students and help them understand how discrimination based on sexual orientation is connected to discrimination based on race. All *isms* are based on the notions of power and privilege and in order to rid our society of racism, we must dismantle all forms of

oppression. Both Elisabeth and Curtis acknowledge that conversations around power

and privilege do not occur in their classrooms and that they would like to do a better

job of bringing these notions into the dialogue. Such conversations are difficult and

require an understanding of the concepts, as well as a sense of how to articulate and

engage with students on them. In Chapter Six I consider how pre-service and in-

service programs can better prepare teacher for such critical conversations.

Using Humor to Communicate with Students

Daniel also makes a conscious effort to address comments relating to sexual

orientation, in particular the frequently used expression "that's gay." He approaches

the situation with humor to make his point.

> I had a kid tell me that that was the gayest thing ever and I said, "No, that
> class has no sexual preference." They had to come on the announcements,
> something about the computer, we had a huge computer problem
> today…and it was a girl and she was like, "that's so gay" and I was like,
> "the computers actually have no sexual preference. None. They're not
> bisexual, there not heterosexual, they're not homosexual,
> nothing".…[She] laughed. But my guess is that in three weeks she won't
> say that's gay. (Daniel)

Sometimes his students respond to his comment that the assignment, or the computer,

or whatever is being called gay does not have a sexual orientation, and the

conversation continues:

> They're like, "Mr. Nemerow, that doesn't make any sense" and I go, "I
> know, so pick a different word." They're like "Fine, this work is dumb."
> I'm like, "Terrific".…. I do the same thing with "That's retarded." "No, it's
> not. This doesn't have an IQ *at all*." And I literally, by the middle of the
> year, have kids censoring themselves.

Daniel uses humor to disarm his students. He troubles the students' discourse as a

way of highlighting the taken for granted language. By speaking in literal terms, he

creates a moment where his students have to pause and take note of the meaning

behind their words. Daniel wants them to understand that what they are saying has no

meaning. He wants them to speak intentionally, in ways that do not offend.

Curtis similarly uses humor as a way of communicating to his students that

name-calling is not ok.

> I don't let kids call me "dog" you know when dog was the big slang thing. Like, "[Mr.] Hunt, what up dog?" "Hey, Johnny's looking for his dog. Has anyone seen his dog cause I'm not his dog."

> [I] try to get a laugh and diffuse…I'm not gonna say, "Young man, I am not a canine." That's just going to make look corny. I often try to do things to make other kids laugh so that the kid who I'm chastising…that the environment is now one of laughter. Not necessarily laughter directly at the kid but just kind of laughter. So, it's harder to get up in arms if people are kind of giggling around you but I'm still getting the point out of it. (Curtis)

Curtis, too, attempts to address offensive remarks by breaking them down and

looking at them literally. Both Daniel and Curtis ask students to rethink what and how

they speak. They communicate that the words students are using are unacceptable and

they raise questions for the students about what they are trying to say. In so doing,

hopefully students will be become more mindful of the language they use and more

aware of the need to think before they speak, as well as the need to question the

accepted vernacular of the day.

On humor, Aoki writes:

> If we were to link the word human with related words like humility, we begin to see a new relationship between self and others. It may help us to remember that human has kinship with humus and humor. We need to move to an earthly place where we can have fun and laugh, too. (as cited in Pinar, 2005, p. 75)

We want to have fun and laugh in our classrooms and it is important to have a sense

of humility, but educators must tread carefully where our students' egos are

concerned. Creating laughter based on one student's comments can backfire, resulting in a strained teacher-student relationship. Additionally, laughter in the classroom might misrepresent the seriousness of our concern over the language used. Teachers must carefully balance laughter and the sense of being at ease with the severity of the content that needs to be addressed.

Swimming in Sync: Working Together Toward Transformation

> Nobody wants to stand out when they're 14 years old in high school. And I really respect the kids that are standing up for their friends who are seen as outsiders. (Elisabeth)

What if standing up or standing out was the norm? What does it take to be an ally in the face of injustice? How can we shift the thinking and actions of our students, moving them from their position as bystanders to that of an ally? Aoki (2005a) speaks of enacting a lived curriculum where students and teachers co-create, acting with and on the curriculum in a critically reflective manner to transform their reality and themselves. Aoki bridges the notions of critical reflection and classroom action through situational praxis in which teachers are liberated from their assumptions and biases. Curriculum as situational praxis is a humanizing effort in which the teacher is seen as interested in and instrumental in the process of his or her becoming, as well as that of *others'*. As co-actors, teachers and students work together to make sense of the curriculum in ways that speak to their current realities and allow them to create new realities that speak to them.

Teachers' and students' experiences become intertwined in the classroom. Aoki (2005g) observes of this relation, "Others help us in our own self-understanding. In this, I feel, is the power and thrust of cross-culturalism" (p. 382). Aoki's statement

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captures the need for self-awareness and the need to look beyond the ego as we

understand who we are. Jardine et al. (2003) express a similar sentiment when

describing how they taught a novel in a middle school classroom: "We worked with

them to make the edges of their known worlds waver and tremble. And we did that

with a particular kind of mindfulness, we think, because what we asked of the

students we also demanded of ourselves" (p. 191). Like Aoki, Jardine et al. exist in a

world of interaction in which meaning is created through communicating with *others*,

meaning about ourselves and about each *other*. Jardine et al. also remind us of the

hermeneutic stance, which leads us to engage and interact, not to master another's

thoughts but to increase our own understandings through the benefit of conversation.

In the classroom, the teacher interacts with students and participates in conversations

with them to increase his or her understandings, as well as to facilitate a process

where students can grow through experience and interaction.

Greene (1973) speaks of co-existence in the classroom as only possible once

teachers begin to develop their own perspectives, independent of the system:

> If the teacher agrees to submerge himself into the system, if he consents to
> being defined by others' views of what he is supposed to be, he gives up
> his freedom "to see, to understand, and to signify" for himself. If he is
> immersed and impermeable, he can hardly stir others to define themselves
> as individuals. If, on the other hand, he is willing to take the view of the
> homecomer and create a new perspective on what he has habitually
> considered real, his teaching may become the project of a person vitally
> open to his students and the world…Seeking the communicative gesture
> and the expressive word, such a teacher will try consciously to move
> among and reflect together with his students. Coexisting with them,
> opening up perspectival possibilities along with them, he and they may
> journey toward some important truths as the days go on. (p. 270)

To embrace transformative practices, teachers and students must learn to live

differently as well to think differently. It is not enough to have the conversation about

what an imagined world might be, we must reflect on how our lives and experiences with the *other* prevent us from reaching our journey's end.

Heading to Shore

Critical reflection is not simply a process to help us understand our assumptions and preconceived notions about the *other*. It is intended to guide our action—action that leads us to question ourselves, our motivations, our beliefs, and leads us to enact a curriculum of action, through which our students can do the same. The question for teacher educators is not why but *how*. What would teachers' engagement with students who differ from them look like if they reflected critically throughout their teacher education programs? What would it mean to re-think and re-frame how we envision teacher education? Can we imagine alternatives to standard approaches? These are some of the questions I consider in the following chapter as I contemplate the implications of my research.

CHAPTER SIX: WALKING ASHORE ALONGSIDE THE *OTHER*:

ENACTING A NEW WAY OF BEING IN THE WORLD

The participants in my study seem like old friends now, though I have only spent a mere five hours in their physical presence. They have sat by my side for months as I have written and reflected on the meaning of their words—words that have made me laugh and have brought me to tears. I am in awe of their honesty and the faith they have put in me to communicate their truths through their lived experience. I feel a deep sadness in coming to the end of my research, for I fear that as I move forward, I will leave them behind. In this chapter I strive to give permanency to their stories by gleaning from them implications for both pre-service and in-service programs for teachers. I hope that through their experiences I can give their voices eternal life, adding to our understanding of how we can prepare teachers to engage fully with all of their students, regardless of their backgrounds.

I come to this stage of my journey much as I began—in a reflective posture, wondering who I am and how I see the world differently given my encounters with these five educators. In this chapter, in addition to considering implications of my participants' words, I reflect deeply on my own transformation as an individual, as an educator, and as a researcher.

Having found each other in turbulent waters, *other* and *otherer* have now come ashore together, seeking a new way of being-with-an*other* in this world. Water is a life source, but to live together, they seek land. Emerging from the water they experience a purification of the self, allowing them to see one an*other* clearly, authentically, honestly. They face one an*other* in their purest form. For my

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participants, it is their sense of social justice, their humanity, and their forgiveness that joins them with the *other*.

Seeing Beyond the Self: Viewing the Broader Landscape

As I move forward, I search for the greater understandings I have gained from my conversations with Curtis, Claudia, Adriana, Elisabeth, and Daniel. I do not attempt to draw conclusions or form generalizations based on their stories. I take their words for what they are, the lived experiences of five dedicated educators who are passionate about their work and who care deeply about their students. Van Manen (1997) explains this process:

> As in poetry, it is inappropriate to ask for a conclusion or a summary of a phenomenological study. To summarize a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result. The poem is the thing. So phenomenology, not unlike poetry, is a poetizing project…. Poetizing is thinking on original experience and is thus speaking in a more primal sense. Language that authentically speaks the world rather than abstractly speaking *of* it is a language that reverberates the world. (p. 13)

My goal is to uncover the essence of their experiences in ways that enhance my understanding of what it means to *other*, bringing me to a place of meaning in which I question and imagine new ways of preparing teachers to engage with students in the classroom.

Finding/Knowing What Guides Us

Through my writing, the importance of a fundamental belief in social justice as a starting point for teachers who wish to teach for transformation comes into focus. I wonder what has led my teachers to choose the path of social justice. As I ask of myself in Chapter One, I also question my participants about what brings them to a place of concern for the *other*. How do we develop a sensitivity to the lives and

experiences of those who are different from us? And how do we find our moral compass when we veer off course? Each of my participants shared with me how they developed an interest in social justice. From their responses, the role of adults in the lives of children becomes overwhelmingly evident.

Parents/Family as models of social justice.

Curtis relates a memory from his childhood that serves as a reminder of his need to be aware of *others*.

> I do remember when I was a little kid sitting around with my parents one night and I said something about "easy peasy Japaneasy." And they very quickly took me to task and made it clear that I wasn't going to be saying stuff like that in the house or at all. And I was clearly just using some expression that I'd heard and didn't have any clue what it meant but they nipped that in the bud right away. I think that was a part of a sensitivity that I had and that carried over to later on. (Curtis)

In addressing Curtis's language, his parents communicate the significance of valuing differences as well as a belief in equity. Later in our conversation we return to the question of the source of our concern for the *other*. He continues:

> I think it starts with my family. I have teachers and preachers and lawyers in my family. Almost everywhere you turn somebody's concerned about fairness. And I do think that having gone to a Christian school that tried to go out of its way to ensure that the young men of privilege were conscious of having to use their powers for the good. I think that was part of it. It was very clear to me that I had an incredibly fortunate education that most people don't get and that I had some responsibility to use it for the good of other people. (Curtis)

His family and his educational context shape his current interactions with the *other*.

Adriana and Daniel also turn to their family as a model of what attitudes and behavior to enact. As I mention in Chapter Four, Adriana's concern for the have-nots stems from her interactions and observations of her grandfather in Nicaragua. She remembers him saying to her just before he died, "Always remember to be fair."

Daniel similarly turns to family as a model of behavior to follow when asked about

the root of his interest in social justice:

> I think from my parents. I know from my parents. And I have this
> conversation with my mom still to this day where a real common thing for
> teachers is choose your battles. I do. I choose all of them and I feel
> like…what's right is right and I think that's why I think about social
> inequalities and things like that. What's right is right. If something is
> being done or perpetrated on someone or something like that, that's not
> ok. I don't feel comfortable just saying, "Well, that sucks for that person"
> and just moving on… I don't think [my parents] talked specifically about
> it. I think my parents are so good at what they do as parents and as
> husbands and wives and as teachers that so much of it I think is just
> modeled…. This is what being a good person looks like—that kind of
> thing. (Daniel)

In Daniel's experience, words need not be spoken. It is enough to see social justice

enacted.

Berkowitz and Grych (1998) refer to this concern for *others* as part of a

child's moral development: "Moral behavior flows from an interest in and concern for

other people" (¶ 8). They explore multiple parental influences on moral development

including empathy, which they identify as a "core moral emotion" (¶ 20). Empathy is

innate in infants and is nurtured by a child's cognitive development, but Hoffman (as

cited in Berkowitz & Grych, 1998) argues that parents play a strong role in

developing this emotion.

Berkowitz and Grych also describe modeling as one of the most effective

ways of ensuring that children develop positive moral behavior: "Children closely

observe their parents' interactions with each other, with family members, and with

people more generally, and from those observations learn a great deal about how to

treat others" (¶ 52).

Gadamer (1975/2004) explains the connection between one's self and one's history, which includes family:

> History does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live…. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. (p. 278)

Our family, the values they communicate to us through both words and actions, form our being, well before we begin the process of contemplating our identity, who we are, and where we fit in the world.

Teachers as guides on the path of social justice.

The words of my participants are a stark reminder of the impact adults have on children. While family members often play a critical role in setting the stage for a child's interaction with *others*, teachers can have an equally important place in the memories of our youth. Claudia shares jokingly that she was raised by wolves. She does not believe that her sense of social justice comes from her parents. In fact, she relates an incident in which her understanding of the world contrasted with her mother's. For Claudia, coming to a place of concern for the *other* resulted from her experiences in the world and her studies.

Hansen (1995) observes that teachers communicate their character through their everyday classroom interactions. Teachers teach more than subject matter. "We teach ourselves," (as cited in Hansen, 1995, ¶ 27) comments one of the teachers in Hansen's study of moral life in schools. Hansen notes, "Every teacher leaves a personal imprint or signature on all of his or her classroom doings, so that what students are being exposed to is not just subject matter but also an outlook on life"

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(¶ 27). In modeling morality, teachers are not simply demonstrating, they are *being*. The modeling is not to prove a point or to provide an illustration; it is being who one is in a way that shapes how students understand what it means to be human.

"Schooling is more socialization than education" (Madrid, 2004, p. 24) and educators, as part of the socialization process, must fully understand the intense power they wield to shape the minds of their students. If we do not practice what we preach, if we only talk the talk and fail to walk the walk, we may miss essential opportunities to share with our students ways of being in the world, ways of engaging with the *other*.

Buber (1945/1967) considers a teacher's way of engaging in the classroom as part of educating the student as a whole. For Buber, ethics and moral character are not components of a lesson; they are to be taught through the teacher's way of being in the classroom and interacting with students. It is often the moments that are separate from direct instruction that have the greatest impact on students.

> It is not enough to see that education of character is not introduced into a lesson in class; neither may one conceal it in cleverly arranged intervals. …Only in his whole being, in all his spontaneity can the educator truly affect the whole being of his pupil. For educating characters you do not need a moral genius, but you do need a man who is wholly alive and able to communicate himself directly to his fellow beings. His aliveness streams out to them and affects them most strongly and purely when he has no thought of affecting them. (p. 105)

We are concerned with the moral and character development of our students at all times, exemplifying how to engage humanly with the *other*. This is the teacher's responsibility to her or his students: "Even when he does not regard me, he regards me" (Levinas, 1989, p. 290). Our responsibility to the *other* is constant, and it is "all the more overwhelming and direct for existing in the space between two people who are

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regarding one another" (Levinas, p. 290). We cannot ignore the moral claim of *others* or our responsibility to them. We cannot pretend that the student-as-*other* in our classroom does not matter; we cannot ignore their difference. By living in our wholeness in the classroom, we can embody what it means to live in a human relation with the *other*.

Do we need to know what guides us? What is the value of reflecting on the social justice messages we received growing up? Are we better positioned to question our actions if we are raised with a social justice mindset? Greene (1986) captures the connection between the teacher as agent of change and critical reflection: "A sense of agency is required of the teacher if such things are to happen; and it is hard to conceive of a teacher who is a reflective practitioner but who lacks a sense of agency" (p. 73). Greene argues for an approach to teaching based on democratic education in which spaces are created where students are provoked to care about what they come to understand, where they learn to become challengers, to take initiative and to do so in a place of dialogue and freedom.

Van Manen (1997) asks us to consider how we "see" pedagogy, arguing that we often confuse the meaning of teaching with what teachers *do*: "Pedagogy is not something that can be 'had,' 'possessed,' in the way that we can say that a person 'has' or 'possesses' a set of specific skills or performative competencies" (p. 149). It is the teacher, not the lessons, who has the greatest potential to connect with students' souls. How does this notion translate to teacher education programs? Can we foster social justice concerns among pre-service teachers? Is it appropriate to bring the political domain so obviously into the classroom? I am reminded of Freire's (1998) words that

teaching is a political act and the classroom is a political space. Can we afford not to nurture our pre-service teachers' social justice upbringings? Can we afford not to help them develop an equity sensibility when these upbringings are not present? What is the consequence for our students' lives, both in and out of the classroom, if we choose not to reflect on what social justice means to us? I return here to the fictional Pecola and the Invisible Man as well as the very real Michelle and W.E.B. Du Bois. While I have not spoken these names for a while, they have remained with me through my writing as a reminder of what happens to young children who are nameless and faceless in the classroom and later become either invisible or exist only as a figment of the dominant group's imagination.

The Struggle to Hold onto Humanity in the Face of Inhumanity: Becoming a "Fountainhead"

As I write about my participants' experiences, I come to understand the internal struggle that often exists in the face of *othering*, for o*thering* is not a neutral act. It is rife with tension and emotion, whether one reflects on the meaning of these emotions or not. Throughout my phenomenological journey I continually question how people can cause harm to *others*, though I remain cognizant of my own complicity in such acts. Is it easier to be human or inhuman? Which is more natural? I believe that beings are born fundamentally good and are socialized to think about people and treat people inhumanely. What is it that prevents us from holding on for dear life to our humanity? Why don't we place more value on our capacity to be good? Levinas (2001) connects our goodness to our interactions with the *other*:

> Inspired by love for one's fellow man, reasonable justice is bound by legal structures and cannot equal the goodness that solicits and inspires it. But goodness, emerging from the infinite resources of the singular self,

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responding without reasons or reservations to the call of the face, can divine ways to approach that suffering other…(p. 207)

We do not need to teach goodness, for we are born good; we simply need to nurture it, as it is our goodness that draws us to the *other*.

Doll (2000) turns to fiction to illustrate the notions of blockheads and splitheads, two ways of being in the world. These ideas help me understand what prevents us from embracing our goodness when engaging with the *other*. Blockheads "cannot move beyond the blocked ego; and so when they act, they act out, blindly and cruelly" (p. 81). They suffer "by being completely unaware. Out of their refusal to examine their thoughts and actions, they close themselves off from the world" (p. 150). Splitheads do not entirely accept the dominant discourse. They "give way a bit to the dichotomies of dominance" but are still "dominated by the discourse of dualism as the measure of self" (p. 146). Doll presents fountainheads as unfettered by literal thinking, free to explore and consider the nuances and complexities of language and of life. This preferred way "conquers not external events and people, but internal thoughts…" (p. 150)—thoughts that can keep us from seeing and engaging with the *other*, thoughts that might lead us to move from *other* to *otherer*. The path of the fountainhead compels us to contemplate our internal thoughts, our inner conflicts, in ways that remove us from an egocentric posture and bring us closer to the *other*.

Tim O'Brien's (1990) characters in *The Things They Carried,* exemplify Doll's categorization. O'Brien's stories of the Vietnam war lead me to question my own humanity and the decisions I make with regard to the *other*. "Dance right," is a sentence I will never forget. "All right, then, dance right" (O'Brien, 1990, p. 136) are the words of Vietnam soldier Henry Dobbins as he threatens to dump another soldier,

Azar, into a deep well for mocking the floating dance moves of a Vietnamese girl whose family was burned in their house.

While the girl was dancing, Azar repeatedly questioned, "Why's she dancing?" to which Dobbins responded it didn't matter, she just was. "Probably some weird ritual" Azar says, and then later that night his mocking begins. Azar mocks because he is unable to see the humanness of the *other*. His job is to kill, to not feel, and this is what he does. He questions, but his questions reveal his inability to feel, to comprehend loss at the level of the girl. Instead he mocks. Mocking is easier. It requires less thinking, less feeling, less contradiction and confusion. Dobbins' response demonstrates the need to hold on to what is morally sound, what is decent, what resembles humanity, even in the most remote, tragic environment. Dobbins tries to survive the contradictions of war, but Azar cannot. Azar succumbs to the evil because what he sees is literal. He thinks he can find an answer to why the girl is dancing, but the answer is elusive. Dobbins understands that the literal interpretation of her dancing does not matter. Doll (2000) argues against "literal seeing, that which blocks heads, freezes feeling" (p. 146). Azar succumbs to the inhumanity that "dominates the landscape" (Doll, 146). His own inhumanity prevents him from imagining and understanding the painful place where the girl resides. O'Brien captures what it means to be a blockhead, as well as the need for those who have clarity through blockheadedness to address a blockhead's attitudes and behaviors. Is Dobbins a splithead or a fountainhead? It is unclear, but his actions reveal a level of understanding and feeling that echo the power of seeing the *other* side.

When we see past ourselves and hammer away at our blockheadedness, what

do we uncover? Are we then able to engage with the *other* in a more humanizing

capacity? Inhumanity is everywhere, but if we can hold on to our humanity when our

external circumstances and our inner thoughts dictate otherwise, we can reach a new

level of engagement with the *other*. We can see past ourselves perhaps for the first

time, allowing us to see the *other*, feel the *other* in a new light. In the classroom, what

might become of our students' interactions with one an*other* if we nurture their

humanness, addressing blockheadedness when it rises to the fore?

Forgiveness: Humanizing the **Other** *and the* **Otherer**

How can we prevent ourselves from moving from our own pain to causing

pain for *others*? What is the role of forgiveness in allowing us to feel for the *otherer*?

Is forgiveness the ultimate display of power-with? Ferrucci (2006) explains what is

necessary to reach forgiveness, which he deems to be an essential variable in this

equation:

> The other important factor (mainly in the case where we personally know
> the offender) is empathy with the person who has offended. If we manage
> to place ourselves in his shoes, understand his intentions and his suffering
> as well as ours, we find it easier to forgive…So we will be able to forgive
> if we can place ourselves in another's shoes; if we are less concerned with
> judgment, and more with understanding; if we are humble enough to give
> up being the patron of justice, and flexible enough to let go of past hurts
> and resentments. (p. 47)

Forgiveness does not come easily, Ferrucci acknowledges, for it runs counter to what

might seem logical:

> And forgiveness is also—or feels—dangerous: It exposes us not so much
> to repetition of the original harm as to feeling vulnerable and open. We
> feel vulnerable because our identity, like ivy that grows over an old
> column and clings to it, is attached to the wrong we have received. We
> feel that if we forgive, we lose our identity, and thus we feel insecure.

> Whereas if we do not forgive, the sense of outrage and indignation may offer some spurious strength, and support our whole personality. But do we really want that kind of support? (pp. 42-43)

Is it better to feel strength from the liberation that comes with forgiveness or from the outrage of our pain? Anger can provide an important stage in processing our pain, but remaining in a place of anger and allowing that to be our only emotional response can become debilitating. Adriana continues to struggle more than a year after coming out to her parents. And though she does not use the term forgiveness to describe how she feels about the pain they cause her by rejecting her wholeness, she decides to put her anger aside in the interest of maintaining familial ties. While this quote appears in Chapter Four, it bears repeating:

> At the very core this is who I am and they hate it. And yet, I still have to sit down…I don't have to but I choose to because I love them…have breakfast, sit across the table with them and engage over a piece of me that as far as they're concerned is a non-entity. (Adriana)

Adriana lives this tension on a daily basis. Hers is a struggle between wanting to be loved and wanting to be true to herself. She chooses to give more weight to the love she feels than to the pain. Kisly (1987/2005) speaks to forgiveness in close relations:

> It is the closed door, of course, that brings the need for forgiveness. Estrangement makes us feel the loss of bonds we may hardly have noticed before. The loss of friendship, alienation from a family member, a sense of being cut off from the vital current of life creates suffering. This suffering can be the fire that refines, that brings the drives of the ego in contact with the deeper self, that ultimately starts us "walking," bringing us to the first steps of the exchange that is called forgiveness. (pp. 2-3)

Perhaps it is precisely the closeness of her relations with her *otherers* that leads Adriana to forgive, that drives her to move closer to them.

Elisabeth, too, tries to move forward from her pain when she engages with her students over instances of being *othered* as a Chinese American. She chooses to focus

on the learning opportunities, believing that the students mean no harm and do not know about the myths behind their stereotypes. By assuming an understanding stance, Elisabeth does not allow the pain of the stereotypes to fester.

Raybon (1996) writes about the hatred for white people that she felt for so many years: "Hate has hurt me good over these long years. It has crippled me and cheated me and mugged me and left me scarred and impotent and dumb" (p. 13). She describes her decision to reclaim herself, to start living as a person defined by more than her ethnicity, and to stop living behind the façade of "ironed" hair and "clipped" speech that brought her closer to whiteness. Raybon realizes that defining herself solely by her ethnicity denies *others* their identity as well: "It hides my individuality and denies me the right to see the individuality of others… And if I deny the individuality of others, I deny their humanity even as I diminish the humanity of myself" (p. 8).

Raybon (1996) chooses to forgive those whom she has hated for so long, but the challenge of forgiving is not lost on her:

> To practice forgiveness I will first have to forgive myself…. Then I'll have to forgive white people—for being white. And myself for being black. And forgive people who don't think they need forgiving, who'll censure me for daring to believe I have the power to forgive them—and that they need to be absolved….I'll have to defend myself to people who view forgiveness as a cowardly response to horrific infractions…It is the most provocative possibility for a racial scenario: that a person of one race can find a way to love a person of another. (p. 10)

Forgiveness is not easy, but it can help us re-claim our humanity and honor the humanity of *others.*

Forgive is from the Old English *forgiefan,* meaning "give, grant, allow," also "to give up." What do we give up in forgiving the person who *others* us? Do we give

up a piece of identity which has come to be defined by the pain of our *otherness*? The expression "forgive and forget" suggests that in forgiving we also forget the wrong done to us. But Ferrucci (2006) clarifies that forgiving and forgetting need not go hand in hand: "I forgive, yes, but I keep well in mind the harm done to me, and I will be mindful that it does not happen again" (p. 42). Forgiveness allows us to move forward, but we remember what has happened to us so we can learn from it and be certain that the behavior does not repeat itself. And because we do not forget, our identity remains in tact. We remain the sum of our experiences and our memories, both good and bad.

In *An Essay on Criticism* (1961/1993), Alexander Pope writes, "To err is *humane*, to forgive, *divine*" (p. 297). *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (Bartleby.com) explains this expression as follows: "All people commit sins and make mistakes. God forgives them, and people are acting in a godlike (divine) way when they forgive." But can we hold people to such a high standard, expecting them to act godlike? And should all wrongs be forgiven? Is there room here for reflection on the gravity of the situation, on the intentionality on the part of the *otherer*?

The weight of forgiveness.

In *The Sunflower* (1976), Holocaust survivor Simon Wiesenthal shares his experience during World War II in which, as a concentration camp prisoner, a dying SS soldier asks for his forgiveness for participating in the murder of 300 Jews burned to death in a building he set on fire with his comrades, or killed by his gunfire as they tried to jump out. Wiesenthal does not grant the man forgiveness and his decision plagues him. He seeks understanding from those close to him in his camp, one of

whom explains:

> You would have had no right to [forgive him] in the name of people who had not authorized you to do so. What people have done to you yourself, you can, if you like, forgive and forget. That is your own affair. But it would have been a terrible sin to burden your conscience with other people's suffering. (p. 55)

Forgiveness is personal, based on individual experience.

*The Sunflowe*r includes responses by 32 individuals to the question Wiesenthal poses of the reader: "What would I have done?" Daiches (in Wiesenthal, 1976) responds by making a critical distinction between understanding and forgiveness, noting that we cannot forgive the crimes committed against an*other*, but we can offer understanding, which he interprets as a kind of forgiveness. Yet, Flannery (in Wiesenthal, 1976) sees Wiesenthal's situation as entirely personal, stating that the notion of whether Wiesenthal could forgive the SS man on behalf of all Jews was irrelevant: "The real situation called for forgiveness by one Jew, any Jew. The situation was personal and intimate" between a dying man in a hospital and a concentration camp prisoner.

For Wiesenthal, or *others* who are called upon to forgive, the inability to forgive may become an unbearable burden. Lamb (1997) comments on the weight of forgiveness, turning to Christian traditions:

> Christian tradition…holds that forgiveness not only helps the victim but also has the capacity to transform the wrongdoer. To forgive another individual is to present a gift of renewal and acceptance; it shows faith in the character of the forgiven person to reform. This idea can be taken so far that victims of heinous crimes torture themselves with the expectation that they should be able to forgive when they cannot…. In this way, the tables get turned and victims begin to see themselves as the worse sinners for not having virtue enough to forgive the evil-doer. (¶ 21)

Lamb questions whether forgiveness that causes the *other* extreme angst is, in fact,

virtuous. She argues that forgiveness is not "good" when the wrongdoing is so horrible that "it seems positively evil to forgive such a person" (¶ 12).

Moral complexities: The place of emotion.

Where does morality fit in our discussion? Should our understanding of forgiveness rest on the justness or unjustness of the action in question, or is there space for us to consider the role of emotions? Murphy (1988) argues that the emotion of resentment, harboring anger against one who has wronged you, is related to self-respect:

> I am, in short, suggesting that the primary value defended by the passion of resentment is *self*-respect, that proper self-respect is essentially tied to the passion of resentment, and that a person who does not resent moral injuries done to him…is almost necessarily a person lacking in self-respect. Resentment (perhaps even some hatred) is a good thing, for it is essentially tied to a non-controversially good thing—self-respect. (p. 16)

While Murphy acknowledges the restorative power of forgiveness, he maintains that forgiveness is not always a virtue: "To seek restoration at all cost—even at the cost of one's very human dignity—can hardly be a virtue" (p. 17). Murphy relates emotion to morality through the feeling of care. Morality is not simply something we believe in, it is something we care about. Care, here, is a concern for the people who are the objects of moral wrongdoing. We cannot, therefore, consider forgiveness as the setting aside of resentment or other emotions associated with being wronged, for those emotions are tied to both our sense of self, and, when the wrong is done to a third party, our care for *others*. Murphy concludes that forgiveness is acceptable only when it does not compromise self-respect, concern for *others,* or the rules of morality.

And what of the* otherer*?

We can move forward in our lives through forgiveness, but what of the *otherer* who does not learn, who continues to *other*? Where does his or her learning fit into our schema of forgiveness? When we forgive, we release ourselves from the prison of our emotions, but we forgive someone else. Is forgiveness a solitary act if it involves the person who has wronged us? What is their role or responsibility in this act of forgiveness?

In writing this phenomenological dissertation, I have frequently come across the notion of forgiveness. In my conversations with peers about Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi party during World War II, on more than one occasion, I have been asked about the place of forgiveness in my understanding and interpretation of his actions. I have long known that I am not one to forgive easily, but this has less to do with my own thoughts on the incidents in question than with the responsibility that the *other* assumes for his or her actions. The question for me rests on the interaction around forgiveness. If it is, in fact, a solitary act, through which I myself can move forward, then it strikes me as rather self-fulfilling in a self-centered way. If forgiveness is, rather, a process involving both parties, the forgiver and the forgiven, then it is a dialogic process, requiring the participation of the wrong doer. And as such, the relationship between *other* and *otherer* becomes of primary importance, as opposed to the *other's* sense of personal well being. How is the act of forgiving different when the *otherer* does not want our forgiveness? Does the process revert back to a solitary effort? Does forgiveness, as Murphy suggests, rest primarily on the question of self-respect?

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Forgiveness is not something I wholly reject, but I look more closely at a person's actions than their words. Interestingly, my wariness of accepting an apology and offering forgiveness runs counter to the socialization of women, according to Lamb (1997), who notes:

> Women in particular are in danger of forgiving prematurely or overlooking offenses. Socialization practices teach young girls to prioritize the resolution of conflict, healing wounds, and repairing relationships….The demands on individual victims to forgive are bound up with traditional notions of what it means to be a "good girl" or "good woman" in which anger and resentment are suppressed. (¶ 22)

How does the notion of forgiveness change when we consider the ways in which we are socialized to accept wrongdoings, to deny what may be in our best interests because of our gender? Should a woman forgive a husband who abuses her, when such forgiveness may lead to continued abuse? Forgiveness can be dangerous when it results in a loss of safety and self-respect.

Forgiveness is horribly complex. As this discussion reveals, there is no one correct way of understanding, interpreting, or granting forgiveness. We cannot require that people ask for forgiveness, nor can we demand that people grant it. But by reflecting on the place of forgiveness in our turning from *other* to *otherer*, I am able to see that there is a role for forgiveness in breaking the cycle of hate. How that role is assumed rests with the *othered*.

As I consider the role of forgiveness in *othering,* I am compelled to reflect on my own understanding of forgiveness. This proves to be a difficult concept for me to explore on a personal level, but I remain mindful that if I can reach beyond my initial prejudices regarding forgiveness, I may gain exponentially in relationships with my *others* and *otherers*.

When Clouds Part: Bringing Light to My Own Transformation

Phenomenological research starts with a project of the self, but its reach

extends to *others*. Through my conversations with teachers, they may have gained a

new self-awareness regarding their participation in as well as their desire to address,

othering in their lives and in their schools. I, too, have undergone significant changes.

Van Manen (1997) clarifies a researcher's engagement in the writing process with

regard to personal transformation:

> Phenomenological projects and their methods often have a transformative
> effect on the researcher himself or herself. Indeed, phenomenological
> research is often itself a form of deep learning, leading to transformation
> of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, increased thoughtfulness
> and tact, and so on. (p. 163).

As I reflect on this phenomenological journey, I am reminded of the experiences I

shared in Chapter One, when my journey unfolded, and I return to my experience in

Slovakia when I *othered* two Roma men as they passed me. I return to this place in

my life because it was at this moment that a schism occurred, that I became troubled

with myself, my actions, and the rupture between the person I believed myself to be

and the person I revealed myself to be.

A Forgiving Posture

I am left wondering about the role of forgiveness in my life. My

understanding of forgiveness has been shaped by visions of people going to

confession and saying, "Forgive me Father for I have sinned," then being told to say

fifteen Hail Mary's. While I acknowledge that this understanding has been formed

wholly by the media as opposed to personal experience, I have nevertheless always

wondered how prayers, words shared with God instead of the person wronged, could

possibly be the answer. I relate this not to deny the worthiness of forgiveness from a particular religious perspective but to reveal my prior understandings, my prejudices, as I reflect on the various notions of forgiveness that inform my evolving perspective.

Considering the role of forgiveness in preventing our movement from *other* to *otherer*, I am asked to think a bit differently, to stretch my understanding of what it means to empathize and who deserves our empathy. Am I capable of empathizing with the *otherer*, as Ferrucci suggests? Can I consider myself an empathetic individual if I find I cannot understand "his intentions and suffering?" Is empathy unconditional? I know I can love unconditionally, for I experience this every moment with my children, but can I say the same about empathy?

I have come to no conclusions about adopting an attitude of forgiveness, but I have come to understand that there are many mitigating factors contributing to one's stance—far more than I had ever imagined. Acknowledging the complexity of forgiveness, I am able to consider the possibility of assuming a forgiving posture in certain contexts, but more significantly I understand that forgiveness is about choice, it is about choosing to salvage a relationship with the *otherer*.

Seeking Forgiveness

Forgiveness "is not ours to give, but to receive" (Dooling, 1987/2005, p. 6), and as such forgiveness is not a solitary act; rather, it involves at least two people, a giver and a receiver. My reflection on forgiveness, therefore, must consider the role of the *otherer*, the person receiving forgiveness, either as seeker or simply as the person who has caused harm. Is there an implicit assumption in forgiveness that the person receiving this kindness wants to be forgiven? I return to the street in Slovakia

where I *othered* two Roma. Dare I ask for their forgiveness? Do I want their

forgiveness? That might bring me a sense of peace, but what then? What do I do with

this peace? Do I feel good about myself once again? This would most definitely be a

false sense of goodness, for I wronged these men. Do I deserve to feel at peace? And

does such a sense of peace, a return to a feeling of goodness, in fact, prevent me from

engaging in the deep reflection that is necessary in order to change my interactions

with Roma, in order to live as I believe? If I follow the words of Murphy (1988),

these men suffered an indignation, a wrong that was tied to their self-respect, and,

therefore, they owe me no forgiveness. And I, as the *otherer*, feel no right to ask for

their forgiveness, nor do I want the peace that might result. I want to be troubled. I

want to be disturbed by own actions. I want to be confused by the disconnect between

my beliefs and my behaviors. Such feelings remind me that I am a living being,

capable of harming *others*, and in need of constant self-reflection. My goal is not to

self-flagellate but to remember the pain I have caused and allow it to propel me

forward toward a more open way of being with *others*.

Restoring Relationships

Stern and Bettmann (2000) write, "The way to overcome hatred is to see the

haters as they have been unable to see those whom they have hated and hurt: to see

them as human beings rather than as 'strangers.'" (p. 113). As I move forward in my

understanding of *othering*, I realize that both *other* and *otherer* wield power, though

in very different ways. The *other* can heal him or herself by forgiving the *otherer*,

choosing to build upon a relationship instead of tearing it down through painful

emotions. It is not just the *otherer* who has a choice to make. Yes, the *otherer* must

seek out the *other* and decide to walk alongside her or him, but to coexist, the *other* must accept the outstretched hand. Kisly (1987/2005) captures this choice within the theme of forgiveness in the following question: "Will I be in relation—to others…or will I refuse that relation?" (p. 2).

The psychological view of forgiveness sees the act of forgiving as an individual attempt to gain inner peace through the release of anger and resentment. This act is separate from the action of the *otherer*. In other words, forgiving the *otherer* is not dependent upon the *otherer* changing in any way (Lamb, 1997). Tillich (1987) writes that "Forgiveness creates repentance…this is the experience of those who have been forgiven" (p. 41). Tillich's religious interpretation of forgiveness sees change, on the part of the *otherer*, as a desired outcome. Lamb puts forth forgiveness as a transaction to restore relationships: "To make it a true transaction, something bigger and broader, the wrongdoer must claim personal responsibility, and attempt to right the wrong" (¶ 30). As a transaction, forgiveness requires change: apology and reparation. Forgiveness as a solo endeavor cannot restore a relationship, as relationships involve more than one person. Through apology, the *otherer* demonstrates remorse and empathy for the *other* (Lamb, 1997). Empathy, then, becomes a path to mutual understanding, allowing the *other* and *otherer* to move forward in a renewed relationship.

As I mention in Chapter One, from the perspective of an educator, interactions around *othering*, regardless of where the *othering* occurs, always have implications for the classroom. While listening to the stories of my participants, I have wondered what their words mean for the experiences of future teachers. In the following

sections I turn to the pre-service and in-service educational environment, envisioning ways in which we can engage in deep, meaningful reflection and conversation that leads to personal growth and change.

Creating New Paths: Giving Direction to My Participants'
Words Through Pre-Service Programs

What will become of the words of my participants? How can they inform the ways in which pre-service and in-service teachers are prepared to engage with students who differ from them? How do we teach our teachers to be painfully honest with themselves—so truthful that they can reflect authentically on the pain they have inflicted on *others* through their thoughts and actions—and in ways that compel them to alter their future behavior?

As much as my participants shared, it was difficult for them to consider themselves in the role of *otherer*. This is not surprising, as we generally prefer to think of ourselves as good people, incapable of causing harm. Additionally, in order to perceive of ourselves of *otherer*, we have to understand first that our actions are biased and that we hold societal power. If we do not know our biases, we cannot possibly see our actions as infused with prejudicial attitudes. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, in my anti-bias workshops, I facilitate an exercise that asks participants to consider the various roles they play around incidents of prejudice and discrimination: target, perpetrator, bystander, and ally. We first reflect on our experiences and then we choose one experience to share in small groups. After the sharing, I take a poll to see which roles participants chose to reveal. Time after time, participants choose more often to share times when they were a target or an ally. Participants are quick to acknowledge that it is harder for them to recall times when

they were a bystander or a perpetrator, and even harder to share these experiences

with their peers, as they do not want to reveal their capacity to cause pain. "Why not

keep these experiences in the recesses of our memory?" I ask. "Why not suppress

them if they are difficult for us?" The value of the exercise never escapes my

participants. They are quick to point out that if we do not reflect on our experiences

as perpetrator and bystander, we cannot change our future actions. As difficult as this

exercise is, it is consistently listed in workshop evaluations as the preferred activity.

There is a sense of liberation that comes from acknowledging our past and realizing

we can change.

Mining for honest answers takes tremendous courage, as well as an

understanding that our biases do not mean we are bad people; rather, we are products

of a society that has socialized us to think certain things about certain groups. Claudia

comments on this process: "I think it's okay to have thoughts but it's not okay to not

question and to just be completely happy with the way things are." What we need is

healthy introspection that leads us to understand from where our assumptions

emanate. Claudia later adds that she appreciates our conversations because "It makes

me think more."

At one point in our conversation Elisabeth says to me, "I have a lot to think

about. I need to do some journal writing." I have asked her questions that she has not

thought about before with regard to her own actions. She needs time to process and

reflect, for we have entered new territory. In sharing the experience in which Daniel

fears using the term "That's gay" may have destroyed a friendship, he comments,

"Wow, I forgot about that. See, you get them on the couch and they start opening up."

My participants are conscious of their thinking, their growth. Our conversations forge new paths, in some cases resurfacing old memories, in others seeking new horizons. Their words provide vivid examples of the power inherent in self-reflection and are an indication of the newness of the experience. Would my participants be further along on their journey toward social justice if they had reflected in such ways during their teacher preparation programs?

What are the possible consequences when we don't prepare pre-service teachers to engage with students who differ from them? Recently I co-facilitated a series of anti-bias workshops for teachers and staff at an elementary school that has a predominantly white teaching staff and a small African American student population. In the two workshops, the evaluations have requested information on how to teach African American students. The faculty wants to know how to make these students listen and cooperate. The teachers present the students as the problem in the classroom. There has yet to be an understanding among the teachers that the way they view their students may actually be problematic and may inhibit their interactions with the students. The teachers and administration seem to be in search of a quick fix—a method or materials that will solve their problems. They have not considered the possibility that regular conversations on race, class, and gender, conversations that address power and privilege, conversations that are by definition uncomfortable and challenging, might help the teachers view themselves differently and attend to their students differently. Can we enhance teachers' careers by beginning conversations in their pre-service programs?

Here I turn to the pre-service context to consider how we can provide a space for the difficult conversations that can lead to personal transformation, in turn shaping our interactions with students who differ from us. My effort is not to come up with a list of solutions or prescriptive answers, for the problem itself is still taking shape. In shifting contexts, I continue to ask questions, and in some cases I make recommendations, exploring possibilities instead of drawing conclusions.

Difficult Conversations around Power and Privilege

As I mentioned in Chapter Five, Elisabeth laments that her conversations with students around power and privilege are not as in depth as they could be:

> I think [it's] not as deep of a conversation as I would like. I think of things in terms of the intersection of race, class, and gender…but I think when I'm engaging in conversation with the kids, I don't bring that up. I think part of it is because sometimes it gets jumbled up in my head like when I'm thinking about myself and I haven't translated the concepts in relatable terms to my kids yet, so I don't feel comfortable talking about it if it's not clear in my head. Now that I'm talking about it, maybe it's something I can process with my kids. (Elisabeth)

Elisabeth has not had conversations about power and privilege with educators—conversations that allow her to frame her thoughts in terms relatable to her students' realities. Consequently, she avoids these conversations with her students, for they are difficult for her to process as an individual and to facilitate as a teacher as much as they are difficult for her students to understand. In talking with me about these challenges, Elisabeth questions whether she can work through the conversations with her students. While conversations with her peers may help Elisabeth understand and organize her thoughts to some extent, there is tremendous room for her to learn and grow with her students when she engages with them.

As I revisit Elisabeth's words, I am reminded of my experience in Slovakia

trying to engage my students in critical conversations about the conditions of the Roma and about their negative feelings for this group. I felt frustrated by my inability to have productive conversations, to ask probing questions that would lead my students to think in new ways. I hadn't yet had conversations with my peers, and this lack of experience revealed itself in the classroom, preventing us collectively from moving forward. More than a decade later when I returned to Slovakia last winter and met with a group of these students, we were able to dig past assumptions and stereotypes, allowing us to think differently. Our conversations flourished. We were ready. I had an understanding of individual and systemic discrimination that I did not have before, I had engaged with my peers on numerous occasions on these topics, and I had facilitated many conversations with students on issues of bias. And my students came to the conversation in a different place. With ten years of classroom experience, they were able to speak of their Roma students, people they engage with, people with faces and names, instead of the nameless Roma community living on the outskirts of town. We were ripe for such conversation, but I am still left wondering how I could have had that conversation with them ten years prior and what their teaching would have looked like over the past ten years if that productive conversation had occurred.

Like Elisabeth, Curtis has concerns about a lack of conversations on power and privilege in the classroom:

> I think I could do a better job of that because I think there is the opportunity at a high school that does emphasize social justice…to give kids a better understanding of where we all are in the larger machine…. I have in a couple of classes before expressed frustration when I see people of color bickering back and forth, working class people bickering back and forth…But I wish it was more of a conversation. It's like Mr. Hunt making little comments but it should be…I should do a better job of building

> things like Socratic seminars around issues of class and race and having big projects about it. (Curtis)

When unprepared to facilitate difficult conversations, we risk lecturing, positioning ourselves as the authority. Elisabeth has the same concern about lecturing to the students on topics instead of engaging in conversation:

> I have a feeling that when you ineffectively engage in conversation you could do more harm. You can get to a point where you feel like you're imposing views on someone and then that's just not going to work at all. That's something that I do my best to avoid as an educator because I think the end goal…when we engage in conversation is transformation for both parties. But in school, with the existing hierarchy, it's a lot like "I know better than you. I'm going to tell you how it is."

What happens to the learning process and to the teacher-student relationship when the teacher is no longer engaged in learning with students, when teachers revert back to the banking model of education (Freire, 1985) in which students are perceived as places to deposit information?

Buber (1947/1965) echoes this concern, as it can lead to an outcome that differs greatly from what the teacher intended.

> I try to explain to my pupils that envy is despicable, and at once I feel the secret resistance of those who are poorer than their comrades…I have made the fatal mistake of *giving instruction* in ethics, and what I said is accepted as the current coin of knowledge; nothing of it is transformed into character-building substance… (p. 105)

Even the most well-intentioned educator, when lacking preparation in facilitating difficult conversations, may revert to "giving instructions" for lack of a more effective approach.

Applebee (1996) re-envisions what curriculum means in the classroom. He presents curriculum as conversation. Instead of developing curriculum around important skills and concepts arranged in a pre-determined logical order, Applebee

suggests teachers "Begin with a consideration of conversations that matter—with traditions and the debates within them that enliven contemporary civilization. The question then becomes, how can we orchestrate these conversations so that students can enter into them?" (p. 52). If the goal of our conversations is, in fact, transformation, and such conversations must involve the notions of power and privilege, what experiences in teacher education programs will prepare our teachers for such challenging, yet essential, work? What will prepare them for "conversations that matter?"

Creating a Mindset: Reflecting Throughout a Pre-service Program

Conversations on race, class, and gender need to happen in the classroom with students. But first they must happen among teachers themselves. What might happen in the classroom when educators attempt to have complex conversations on emotional topics when they have not first articulated their own thoughts and been exposed to a range of perspectives through similar conversations with peers? Teachers need to develop a level of comfort thinking about and talking about power and privilege before they engage in conversations on these topics with students. Reflection can and should occur on an individual basis. Vivian Paley's *White Teacher* (1979) illustrates the power individual critical reflection can have on one's thinking and teaching. But through conversation we can experience what we are asking our students to experience. We can delve into the unknown and the unpredictable. We become forced to address that which makes us uncomfortable, that which problematizes our thinking and pushes us forward as individuals and as a society. We cannot keep critical conversations in the theoretical domain, nor can we reserve them exclusively for

private journaling. Pre-service teachers must share their inner critical conversations with their peers in the classroom, delving into the complexity of difference, entering the dark and murky waters where outcomes are uncertain.

Preparing teachers in teacher preparation programs to engage with *others* in the classroom (often referred to as preparing teachers for diversity) is a relatively new endeavor. The idea of educating pre-service teachers for diversity, through multicultural education, began in the early 1970s (Goodwin, 1997). In 1973, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education's first Commission on Multicultural Education wrote:

> Multicultural education programs for teachers are more than special
> courses or special learning experiences grafted onto the standard
> program. The commitment to cultural pluralism must permeate all
> areas of the educational experience provided for prospective teachers.
> (as cited in Goodwin, p. 5)

Despite this policy statement, the majority of multicultural teacher education has been and continues to be primarily an "add on," providing a supplement to a teacher education program instead of a basis for teacher education. Teacher preparation programs must provide for continued learning on topics of difference in order to avoid being an add-on component to learning about teaching and to avoid communicating the message that "Multicultural concerns are not *real* concerns of teaching and learning" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 749).

Single courses and short-term programs are ineffective (Washington, 1981; Sleeter, 1992) and ignore the idea that preparing teachers for diversity is about consciousness raising. Teaching for diversity is not about implementing a set curriculum or learning a specific teaching strategy. Teaching for diversity is about re-

conceptualizing the culture of the school in ways that connect the experience of schooling to students' lived realities outside of the classroom. It is about creating habits of mind that allow teachers to understand the lens through which they see the world and to be mindful of how that lens was formed, as well as how that lens affects decisions in the school community. It is about moving beyond curriculum as a "how to" and envisioning curriculum as a "why" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000), as something to understand rather than do.

Villegas (2007) writes, "Prospective teachers generally enter teacher education believing that cultural diversity is a problem to be overcome and that students of color are deficient in some fundamental way" (p. 374). Yet, at the same time, Fullan's (1993) research found that a random sample of student teachers at the University of Toronto claimed they want "to make a difference in the lives of students" (p. 1) when asked why they entered the teaching profession. The challenge for teacher education programs is to create a shift in how teachers perceive people of backgrounds different from their own, so they will see that making a difference in a student's life involves embracing that student's identity. This process is first and foremost dependent on schools of education including social justice in their mission statement and secondly on living that mission statement in all areas of programming, rather than leaving such beliefs to the work of "urban education" or "minority education" departments.

Power and privilege and the dynamics of oppression are essential components of any discussion about inequity in the classroom (Bohmer & Briggs, 1991; Davis, 1992; Dinkelman, 2000; Henry, 1993; Kailin, 1994; King, 1991; Ladson-Billings,

1996; Sleeter, 2005). Discussing prejudice and discrimination only at the individual level fails to acknowledge the systemic nature of oppression. We cannot separate what happens in school from what happens in society: "…the way students are thought about and treated by society and consequently by the schools they attend and the educators who teach them is fundamental in creating academic success or failure" (Nieto, 1999, p. 167). It is, therefore, essential that prospective teachers engage in challenging conversations that force them to come to terms with their own participation in oppressive structures, but also to understand that the complexity of difference does not begin in the classroom; it only manifests there. Teachers are the products of an educational system that has a long history of discrimination, and debilitating, as opposed to liberating, pedagogy (Nieto, 1999). Teachers are also products of society, and they bring to the classroom all of their assumptions and beliefs about differences that society perpetuates. Methods of teaching in teacher education programs should not be separate from the political and economic implications of teaching as a social practice and schooling as a social institution. Pre-service education classes must move beyond description of teaching contexts and analysis of readings to explore how students' lives shape their understanding of course content. In what ways are you advantaged and disadvantaged by systems of oppression? In what ways do you participate in the process of *othering*? How do/can you act as agents of change in your community?

While the classroom may be the point of contact with students, it should not be our starting point. We must think comprehensively about preparing our future

teachers to work with students who differ from them. The entire institution is responsible for educating future teachers about diversity.

The amount of time spent on critical reflection may pose a challenge to developing critical habits of mind. Jennings and Smith (2002) explored the role of critical inquiry in contributing to transformative processes, during a course and beyond. In their case study analysis, they conclude that teachers need opportunities for collaboration and critical reflection over time. Cross (2003) similarly concludes that academic content and field experiences, together, are not enough to prepare teachers for diversity. She argues for ongoing, systematic professional development beyond college classes to examine teachers' beliefs and prejudices. Critical reflection as a habit of mind, which encompasses all aspects of teaching and learning, becomes an embodied way of knowing and living in the world. Every course should include critical reflection as part of an ongoing process that begins on a student's first day in the program.

Autobiography as a way to bring us closer to ourselves and others.

Buscaglia (1982) asks, "How many classes did you ever have in your entire educational career that taught you about you?" (p. 71). Seemingly responding to Buscaglia, Elisabeth comments that she would have rejected conversations around identity as an undergraduate:

> If I were to take a class in college I'd be like whatever, I'm secure in my identity, I don't need this class. Until I stepped inside a classroom, Until I stepped inside a classroom, I didn't know what I was going to be confronted with, and so I think classes like that are hard because people don't want to engage in the work, because they're like I don't need it. (Elisabeth)

While it is true that the value of critical reflection may not become apparent until pre-service teachers enter the classroom, how much better prepared are teachers to engage in conversations about difference when the reflection process has already begun? When critical reflection becomes a philosophy and a cornerstone of teacher preparation programs, the *why* is evident.

Buscaglia asks us to think and learn about who we are. I add to this, the need to think and learn about each *other*. I borrow from phenomenology and critical race theory in proposing autobiography as a means of learning about oneself and *others*. Van Manen (1997) writes, "An adult's understanding of a child's experience has something to do with the way this adult stands in the world" (p. 137). But how can the adult truly grasp the child's experience if the adult does not know where or how he/she stands in the world? By engaging pre-service educators in reflecting on their own lived experiences, our future teachers can begin to understand themselves, thereby opening themselves to their students. Autobiography reveals who we are, our prejudices, our assumptions, our positionality, our being. Our lived experience provides a starting point from which we can begin to understand ourselves as teachers and what it means to *be* a teacher.

Autobiography also provides a space for counterstorytelling to emerge. Critical race theory (CRT) uses storytelling to challenge the dominant discourse. CRT draws on the lived experiences of people of various backgrounds by including methods such as storytelling, biography, testimony, and narrative. Counterstorytelling allows voices that have been silenced to rise to the fore. The method privileges experiences that are often left untold, thereby "building community among those at

the margins of society, putting a human and familiar face on educational theory and practice, and challenging perceived wisdom about the schooling of students of color" (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004, p. 247).

In the Intergroup Dialogue classes that I teach for undergraduate students, I ask students to prepare a testimonial to share in class. They write one part of their testimonial about the identity that is the subject of the class (race, class, gender, etc…) and the second part of their testimonial about another aspect of their identity. I always share my testimonial with the class to give them an example of the depth of experience I am hoping they will share and to demonstrate that I consider myself a learner among them. The dialogue classes are built around diversity. For example, the men/women dialogue includes both men and women; the people of color/white dialogue includes people of various races and ethnicities, so a range of experience often naturally emerges. From student reflections, it is evident that the testimonials are a powerful way to access multiple voices:

> During this week's dialogue, some of the most rewarding moments occurred as I was listening to others' testimonials. It was especially heartwarming to hear other African-Americans' testimonies that were similar to mine. I felt a collective understanding with my people as if through our race, we shared a common experience, despite differences in gender, class, and age. (Intergroup Dialogue student reflection)

Another student compares listening to testimonials about race to learning about racism in other schooling experiences.

> In school, we learn about racism, but often it is a discussion of events from decades ago. In our minds, we learn to equate a "racist act" with extreme things like people of color being completely denied things, like access to a restaurant or medical attention. We never hear about the murky middle ground that racism thrives in today. (Intergroup Dialogue student reflection)

Testimonials provide access to that "murky middle ground," offering insight into the real-world tensions of our students.

But what happens when people are not willing to share so easily or a range of experience is not present in the classroom? Educators can turn to composite characters based on interviews and biographical narratives to present counterstories. Sleeter and Bernal (2004) write that "Composite characters allow students and educators of color to relate to or empathize with the experiences described in the counterstories, through which they can better understand that they are not alone in their position" (p. 247). The purpose of sharing these stories is not to celebrate difference, but to name the injustice that occurs in society as a first step in challenging it.

Autobiography and a curriculum of forgiveness.

Autobiography can transform the self as well as relationships with *others*. Autobiography can also transform curriculum. As we consider what it means to teach for transformation and to reflect critically about our experiences as *other* and *otherer* as a way to bring us closer to our students-as-*other*, we must turn our attention to the nature of curriculum. What in the curriculum do we need to de-construct and re-construct in ways that challenge dominant discourses, in ways that bring us alongside the *other?*

In reflecting on what it means to be human and on the role of forgiveness in channeling our humanity as we engage with the *other*, I wonder how we can live these notions through curriculum. What would it look like to develop a curriculum of forgiveness? In thinking this through, I retain Applebee's emphasis on conversations

that matter. A curriculum of forgiveness would focus on agency, on choice—the choice between a relationship with an*other* or the pain that oozes when one is wronged. To truly enact a new way of being in the world, to envision a place where *other* and *otherer*, oppressor and oppressed, walk together as a way of physically redefining their relationship, we must think differently about our pain. But conversations on forgiveness must retain the complexity inherent in the concept. Is forgiveness a virtue? Does forgiveness rest on moral justice? Is forgiveness a healing concept? Are there contexts in which forgiveness is not an option? A curriculum must also focus on developing empathy, both as *other* and *otherer*, for empathy can provide the shared emotion that brings two people together after a wrongdoing.

There are certainly historical examples to refer to, such as the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa following the dismantling of the oppressive Apartheid regime. And Wiesenthal's encounter in *The Sunflower* is an excellent means of introducing the nuances of forgiveness. But by using student autobiographies around *othering*, pre-service teachers can begin to personalize the concept of forgiveness, imagining what it would be like to assume a forgiving posture. The complexity of the conversation reveals that there is no singular truth, no right answer about when, how, or even whether to forgive or not. But the focus on choice in a curriculum of forgiveness leaves students aware of their agency in any given situation.

Managing Resistance to Critical Reflection

Why not engage our students in conversations about who we are, how we see ourselves and how we see *others?* Some white students might be resistant to

conversations that address inequality because they do not believe inequality exists, while others may resist the idea that inequalities have a structural foundation (Davis, 1992). Resistance may further occur because students want to avoid the process of examining their own lives and recognizing the power they wield. Consequently, they maintain an intellectual, abstract stance on issues of inequality. Davis attributes some resistance to the fact that students often come from homogenous communities and lack exposure to different forms of discrimination, which results in skepticism when faced with new arguments.

What does silence mean in these challenging conversations? Is it a form of resistance to critical conversations? By not engaging, students force the instructor to carry the conversation and provide the analysis. While conversation may be intended, lecture results. This process can inhibit introspection among students. While students may listen attentively, they do not participate reflectively. Gay and Kirkland (2003) suggest engaging students in introspective reflection and giving them opportunities to have critical conversations with their classmates. The process of dialogue provides a crucial opportunity for perspective and consciousness raising. The challenge, then, becomes how to create an environment safe enough for all voices and opinions to be heard.

Engaging pre-service teachers in critical reflection is not easy. Gay and Kirkland (2003) observe that an obstacle to engaging in critical reflection is pre-service teachers' lack of understanding about what self-reflection is. Reflection becomes confused with description, which misses the analytical introspection that can lead to transformative change. A related problem is the lack of guided practice in self-

reflection. An additional obstacle the authors identify is the belief among pre-service teachers that teaching is based on objective skills that are applicable in all situations with all students. Engaging in a critical process, therefore, requires a shift in students' philosophy of teaching and learning.

When students are guided through the process of reflection and are encouraged to think about personal growth, as opposed to what they believe they are expected to learn, they can begin to think differently. I see this happen in my Intergroup Dialogue courses. I watch students move from analysis of readings in early reflections to introspection as the course progresses. I respond to their reflections by commenting on what resonates for me and by asking questions to encourage deeper reflection. We spend time talking about what dialogue means as a way of distancing ourselves from the debate style we have been trained to understand through our schooling experience. The dialogue approach engages students with one an*other*, responding to and probing each *other*. When true dialogue occurs, there is much upon which the students can reflect. They write about the classroom conversations and what these mean to them and to their understanding of the world. Our classes differ from most on campus in that personal growth is our core focus. We take on the notions of curriculum as conversation, discussing conversations that matter. In thinking differently about how we prepare our pre-service teachers, I turn to these dialogue classes as a model for how to engage in critical conversations and critical reflection in any course. How might our pre-service educators be better prepared to engage with *others* if dialogue were accepted as the conceptual framework of all courses?

Fiction As a Way to Uncover Dominant Structures

Though research (Jennings & Smith, 2002; Harrington, Quinn-Leering & Hodson, 1996) points to the use of case studies as a way to engage in conversations around difference and critical reflection, teacher educators must be mindful not to allow a discussion in the third person to reign in the classroom. Case studies certainly have their place when working with pre-service teachers who lack classroom experience, but they have their limitations as well.

Melnick and Zeichner (1997) identify the benefits of using case studies to prepare teachers for cultural diversity. Useful case studies illustrate the challenges of teaching diverse students. Melnick and Zeichner note that case studies allow teachers to explore emotionally charged issues in a safe manner. But when conversations around cases remain in the hypothetical realm or in the third person, pre-service teachers are given an "out" from participating in difficult conversations that require personal exploration. How can our teachers learn to engage in emotionally charged topics, which will likely emerge in a democratic classroom, if we avoid them during their teacher education? Additionally, case studies often lack the depth of description that allows readers to get a true sense of the individuals involved. Further, case studies depend heavily on analysis rather than imagination.

Fiction can provide a way into difficult conversations, filling in some of the gaps left by case studies. As described earlier, Doll (2000) presents fiction as a way for us to consider the behaviors of people who accept the dominant discourse, referred to as blockheads. Those who reflect on the dominant discourse but remain dominated by it, are referred to as splitheads. And individuals who are self-aware

enough to challenge their own participation in the dominant discourse, are referred to as fountainheads. By examining a range of characters in fiction, we can gain insight into our own actions, considering our engagement with the *other* and the ways in which we participate in systems of oppression. Fiction provides the way in, allowing us to move beyond literal thinking, the kind of thinking that results in a blocked head. But we should not remain in the fictitious domain. From Pecola's story in *The Bluest Eye,* I can engage students in a conversation about their own process of socialization, about the ways in which they experience living at the "hem of life," or the ways in which they benefit from a system that keeps Pecola on the outskirts of town. We move from fiction to reality, contemplating our own experiences as *other* and *otherer*.

Educating the Teacher Educators

In engaging the entire academic institution in the preparation of teachers for diversity, how do we ensure that all faculty are willing to take on the challenge? Cross (1993), an African American teacher educator, notes the ambivalence of fellow faculty toward preparing teachers for diversity as a challenge. Ladson-Billings' (1999) review of programs preparing teacher for diversity found homogeneity among teacher educators to be an issue throughout the literature. Ladson-Billings notes that teacher educators' experiences with diverse *others* is often limited and asks, "How can they [teacher educators] teach what they don't know?" (p. 98). Diversity issues often become the domain of the faculty of color in predominantly white institutions, as opposed to a concern for the entire faculty, a process that perpetuates *othering* in institutions (Melnick & Zeichner, 1997). When teaching for diversity is envisioned as a comprehensive endeavor, as a foundational principle in teacher education programs,

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conversations around *othering* become the responsibility of all teachers. Just as teaching for diversity should be for all pre-service teachers, and not limited to urban education or minority education programs, so, too, should teaching for diversity be for all faculty. When equity in education is taken seriously, teachers can reach a place of comfort with their own discomfort in the classroom. Students will sense this comfort, contributing to their own emerging comfort.

But how do we ensure that faculty are equipped to prepare their students to teach for diversity? Melnick and Zeichner (1997) discuss a program that provides a two-week intensive institute with a follow-up network experience that was designed to increase the capacity of the participating institutions to prepare teachers for diversity. Teacher education for diversity "involves the profound transformation of people and of the worldviews and assumptions that they have carried with them for their entire lives" (Melnick & Zeichner, p. 33). But, institutions must think carefully about the challenge of preparing faculty to engage in transformative teaching with prospective teachers. Would it be appropriate to expect such transformation of pre-service teachers in a two-week period? Can we expect the necessary transformation of faculty to occur in such a limited period of time?

Like students, professors may resist the openness necessary for true reflection. Pang, Anderson, and Martuza (1997) note that in a professional development program to prepare them to teach for diversity, most professors "skirted around issues of personal prejudice and institutional exclusion; they were reluctant to talk about their feelings, fearing they might be seen as closed-minded" (p. 68). It is essential for

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professors to be actively involved in the process of learning, as their experiences and understandings may differ from *others*.

Van Manen (1997) writes, "'He who cannot teach, teaches teachers'…. Shouldn't we shudder at an incredible arrogance and inevitable sophistry implied in the idea of teacher education? Who dares to elevate himself or herself to such exalted status?" (p. 148). In my experience as a Ph.D. student immersed in coursework, I had only two encounters with professors whom I felt actively participated in the class as learners. It was immediately evident to me that these classes were different. The energy was different, as was my engagement. What happens to our teaching, at any level, when we abandon our own learning? As a person and as a professional, we suffer and so do our students. It is imperative that institutions, and the individuals that form that institution, avoid the assumption that professors have a complete understanding of diversity issues. Understanding diversity and the nature of *othering* as it relates to schooling is an ongoing process for all.

Professors, like classroom teachers, often live isolated existences, teaching by themselves and interacting only with students in the classroom. I imagine pre-service programs as a community of teacher educators, just as I envision school as a community of teachers. To create this sense of community, teacher educators must set aside their "arrogance," abandon their "sophistry," and adopt a position of openness to new ideas and new learning from one an*other*. To accept the *other* in one's department and to accept the *other* in one's classroom, teacher educators must learn to face their own egos. I imagine teacher educators having the difficult conversations with one an*other* that they want their students to have in the classroom. I see teacher

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educators committing the time to write and share their autobiographies with one an*other*. I envision teacher educators participating in reading groups that use fiction to explore notions of dominance and subordination, questioning their own complicity in systems of oppression. Through communication and openness teacher educators can participate in their own "profound transformation" which translates into more authentic and open dialogue with pre-service teachers.

Seeking/Encouraging More than Good Grades

How do we overcome student resistance and institutional challenges to engaging in critical reflection and conversations around race, class, and gender in pre-service education programs? Too frequently schools of education that have diversity requirements allow students to fill this requirement with classes that have solid readings but offer little opportunity for personal and group investigation. My own experience as a Ph.D. student reflects this approach. As an anti-bias educator I was frustrated by the lack of critical conversation in my courses exploring race, class, and gender. I often wondered to what extent my professors feared having challenging conversations that raised discomfort. I also wondered to what extent my professors have had their own challenging conversations with their peers. They are certainly well versed in the literature, but how much talking have they done? Is it possible to engage students on a level at which they have not been engaged themselves?

However, we cannot focus solely on the role of the instructor here. Many of my peers in my graduate program, as well as the undergraduate students in the Intergroup Dialogue classes that I teach, prefer to keep silent in classes on race, class, and gender for fear of saying the "wrong" thing, or for fear of expressing an idea that

the professor/instructor disagrees with and seeing this reflected in a poor grade. In one case, this fear proved to be well founded. A peer of mine was forced to leave a multicultural education class after the professor verbally attacked her opinions and sent e-mails to the class expressing his concern that *he* didn't feel safe. The professor did not want the student to remain in the class. The student determined that it was in her best interest to leave the class, as well. From my conversations with her, she felt threatened and unsafe. She also felt that there was no way she could do well in the class given what had transpired. Consequently, the student completed the class as an independent study with her advisor. Where is the dialogue in such a setting? Might the learning be: express your honest opinion and there may be dire consequences?

This reality raises an essential question: Is it appropriate to have conversations on race, class, and gender in graded courses? Are there means of having such conversations in a safe environment unencumbered by concerns about a grade point average? As an instructor of Intergroup Dialogue courses at a large public university, I struggle each semester with the process of grading. I ask students to submit weekly reflection journals based on our conversations in class and the assigned readings, but because the course is graded, I must in some way evaluate their reflections. This process is hugely problematic for me. I emphasize throughout the entire course that I am not interested in reading what students think I want to see. I am not concerned about whether students have an opinion that is diametrically in opposition to mine. I care about the amount of thought and reflection that went into writing each journal. Sadly, I know that as soon as a letter is attached to an assignment or a course, students will begin to think about how they can get an "A." And this thinking may

lead them away from honest reflection. I know this because I have been this student throughout my educational career, and even most recently, in one of the last of my Ph.D. classes. In writing a paper for a professor, I thought about what he would want to see. And I was rewarded for this thought process. I was one of two students asked to read my paper aloud in class. How can we expect honesty from our students when at some level our grades will always be subjective? What is the purpose in assigning grades to classes that require such honesty? What are these classes really for? How might students approach introspection and conversation differently if such classes were pass/fail?

Many of the ideas I have imagined for pre-service education programs apply to the in-service context. I turn now to consider possibilities for educating our in-service teachers to teach for transformation.

When the Path Wears Thin: Imagining Enduring, Comprehensive In-Service Programs

Writing about my participants' lived experiences, I realize the limitations of thinking exclusively in terms of critical reflection for pre-service teachers. How can we provide opportunities for current teachers to have authentic conversations around *othering*, reflecting on their own experiences as well as their interactions with their students?

In my anti-bias workshops with teachers, I frequently hear comments such as, "I can address bias in my classroom, but then the students leave and walk in the hallways or play on the soccer field, and they continue with their name-calling. What can I do?" It is rare that I encounter a school or school system that is wholly committed to fostering a safe, inclusive space for *all* students. Adriana comments that

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her school is beginning to address this notion of consistency among faculty and staff response: "We've starting to address some of that now. And the language we're using is that every adult is responsible for every child."

Like pre-service teachers, our current teachers need a far deeper understanding of how to engage with *others* in the classroom than can be provided in an "add-on" approach or a one-time professional development program. We cannot expect a lifetime of socialization to be dismantled overnight.

In imagining in-service programs for teachers that include critical reflection, it is necessary to remain mindful of good professional development practices in general. Considering the goal of such professional development, I turn to the goal of multicultural education, which is to transform schools into institutions that provide educational equity. For multicultural education to be successful, Banks (2004) notes, it must include institutional changes in curriculum: the attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of school staff, and the culture of the school. The objectives of in-service programs, then, must include facilitating among teachers an examination of individual and institutional bias and creating a greater school culture based on equity. Such in-service programs must be comprehensive and long-term, to counter the notion that diversity is an "add-on" topic, and require institutional commitment and ongoing support for teachers. Collaboration, critical colleagueship (Lord, 1994) and reflection must be key components as teachers attempt to examine their own attitudes and behaviors. I explain each of these elements below and then consider how they might be combined in a comprehensive effort to engage in-service teachers and staff in an examination of *othering* as a way to engage in transformative thinking.

Ladson-Billings (1999) refers to institutional commitment as an essential ingredient in the success of efforts to teach in diverse settings. Without institutional commitment, professional development on diversity has little chance of effecting any real change. In-service programs intended to facilitate teacher engagement with students who differ from them must include the participation of all professionals in the school, regardless of their position or title. In my ten years providing anti-bias workshops in schools, I can recall only two workshops in which support staff, or those responsible for support staff were present. How should the bus driver who witnesses name-calling respond? Does the school have a comprehensive policy on the issue of name-calling and have the bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and maintenance staff—the eyes and ears of the school—been invited to the conversation about how to implement that policy? In one workshop at a private Catholic school, I recall a computer technology staff member sharing the *othering* he has heard among students in the hallways. When asked how he responded, he clarifies that he does not feel empowered to respond in any way. He has not been included in the conversation.

An institutional commitment can only be achieved if administrators re-examine the purpose of education and re-consider who is responsible for educating our children. If we consider all staff who come in contact with our students during their schooling experience as *being* with our children, then we must include them in our efforts to examine our biases and we must consider them models of social justice along with our classroom teachers.

Conversations that have transformation as a goal take time. Education intended to shape educators' interactions with the *other* must be ongoing and

supported. It takes time to develop an awareness of one's own bias and the ability to identify and address bias within one's environment, and likely even longer to identify and address institutional bias. The inquiry necessary to achieve this is part of an ongoing process for any individual or institution committed to challenging bias.

Hawley and Valli (1999) identify collaborative problem solving as a key principle in designing effective professional development. To address bias issues on a school-wide basis, it is essential that teachers and administrators collaborate. Teachers can tackle issues of bias in their classroom, but without the creation of school-wide policies and mechanisms of support, in which teachers have a voice, teachers face an uphill battle in trying to create a safe learning environment. Related to collaboration is Lord's (1994) notion of critical colleagueship, which emphasizes the need to participate critically in our examination of how we and our colleagues engage in the classroom. As described in Chapter Five, critical colleagueship allows teachers to explore the varied viewpoints on diversity-related issues and to work together to find solutions to problems.

And finally, reflection is a pivotal component of any program aimed at addressing *othering* (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Howard, 2003). For educators to understand their own bias, they must first engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection through which they question their behaviors and attitudes toward diverse learners in various settings. Why did I treat student "X" in this way? What assumptions do I have about student "X's" performance and behavior in class? On what have I based my assumptions? What messages did I receive growing up about groups other than my own that might form the basis of these assumptions? Through

an honest analysis, educators can begin to understand their biases and then begin to address them. Paradoxically, diversity education also requires learning from *others*. Hearing *others'* stories helps educators develop multiple perspectives.

Miranda, Scott, Forsythe, Spratley, and Conard (1992) argue that a comprehensive, district-wide multicultural education program will increase the chances of successfully educating diverse students. The authors describe a program that combined several delivery components, including staff development, curriculum/instructional changes, a multicultural advisory committee, three-year multicultural education plans, multicultural education resources, and multicultural courses. Setting aside the current educational environment with its emphasis on high stakes testing, can we imagine a level of engagement and interaction among educators that would lead to authentic growth and transformation? Can we imagine a district implementing a long-term program as Miranda et al. suggest? What would it look like if we combined all of the elements described above in an in-service effort to enhance teachers' capacity to engage with the other in the classroom?

I envision a district-wide approach to in-service education that views conversations around difference as foundational to effective teaching and provides structures to give those conversations meaning in schools. This vision regards such conversations as forming an umbrella, developing an overarching mindset that frames all other types of professional development. For example, when social studies teachers gather to explore new strategies, materials, and ways of engaging students, how are they incorporating questions about difference into their conversations? I return here to my workshop participants, Joelle and Sydney, and their discomfort

around the discussions and assignments on slavery. I wonder how their experience might have been different if their teacher had participated in extensive professional development on diversity, followed by subject specific professional development that questioned how all students are reflected in the planning and implementation of the curriculum. Our students are othered in every aspect of their schooling experience, and, therefore, questions around diversity must have a place in each and every conversation among educators.

I imagine a two-year professional development program in which individuals with similar job descriptions throughout a district are grouped in "home" groups and gather on a regular basis, meeting for the first year of the program in a variety of formats including workshops, group meetings, and on-line discussions where they address concerns, issues, and topics around difference, which have been established by each group.

Determining content would be part of the work of program organizers and participants; however, the following areas might guide the development of content. Derman-Sparks (1989) identifies four goals of anti-bias education: 1) to develop strong self-identity among self and among students; 2) to develop understanding and empathy for others; 3) to develop critical thinking about bias; and 4) to develop skills to confront bias. The Anti-Defamation League's A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute (Bettmann, 1998) translates these goals into a diversity training program for educators that includes four stages: identity, cultural awareness, examining bias and confronting bias. In my undergraduate Intergroup Dialogue classes, we move through several stages: identifying commonalities and differences, sharing stories,

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understanding privilege and oppression, and moving forward through action. Each of these approaches provides a framework for moving individuals through a process of self-awareness that has action as an end result. The approach selected provides a general guide, acknowledging that conversations around identity require the creation of a safe, trusting space—it is the participants who fill in the content by discussing what is relevant to their lives and their communities.

This vision also includes the creation of a School Policy Committee in every school responsible for reviewing existing policies and creating new policies that reflect equitable treatment of students (e.g. grouping, tracking) and that ensure a consistent approach to biased behavior or incidents among students both in and out of the classroom. Students will be a part of the committee as a way of including as many voices and perspectives as possible.

A few months into the program, teachers will begin meeting in "school" group meetings organized by age level/subject level. In these meetings, teachers will engage in the critical colleagueship and collaborative problem solving that contributes to an understanding of all students as part of the learning community. Such a commitment of time and energy is an investment in the lives of our educators and educational staff, as well as the lives of current and future students.

Curriculum must be an area of focus in a comprehensive effort to think critically about ourselves and the schooling of our students. A curriculum of forgiveness, autobiography, and fiction, provide elements that can transform the ways in which teachers and students understand one an*other*, engage with one an*other*, and engage with *others* outside of the school context. A district-wide curriculum

committee will work in concert with a local university school of education to imagine new ways of understanding curriculum in an effort to relate it to students' lives, reflecting social and political realities.

Brown (1992) recommends in-school research as a component of multicultural education programs for in-service teachers. I envision action research as a critical component of any effort to engage in-service teachers in a process of personal transformation that translates to change in the classroom. In the second year of the program, teachers participate in a university course on action research where they learn the value and process of action research and begin discussing the subject of their action research. The ongoing school group meetings provide an opportunity for teachers to get feedback on their research. Action research allows teachers to think critically about what they do in the classroom in terms of the life their curriculum takes and the way they interact with students.

A phenomenological approach to thinking about and writing about their research will further develop teachers' introspection and autobiographical positioning, foregrounding their understanding of the phenomenon they have selected to study. A phenomenological approach also develops teachers' pedagogical competence (van Manen, 1997) as well as their capacity to think in terms of change. Van Manen writes, "We are interested in competence because we want to know what to do and we want to be able to distinguish what is good and what is not good for a child: as pedagogues we must act, and in acting we must be true to our calling" (p. 158). A phenomenological approach to research will aid teachers in maintaining a pedagogical orientation, remaining mindful of what is best for their students.

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Once the two-year program is over, teachers are expected to continue weekly meetings in their grade level/subject groups. These meetings have now become a part of the school culture. Teachers and staff are also expected to continue their bi-weekly on-line conversations with their home groups. The School Policy Committee is an additional school structure that continues to meet regularly and handle school-based diversity issues.

While this arrangement is just a sample, the essential idea is to incorporate all individuals in the process in different ways, and to provide mechanisms that allow for comfort and trust to develop, as well as the time necessary for difficult conversations to unfold. The goal is to create a mindset where thinking about difference is a guiding principle in our approach to and practice of education. Such a commitment necessitates a belief in the power of personal transformation, as well as a belief in the power of self-reflection on race, class and gender to influence our interactions positively with students who differ from us.

Turning Toward the Horizon

> I think we need to teach children the importance of others, and that they cannot grow in this world without taking in others…. We need to teach them to trust others again because we're all frightened to death of each other. (Buscaglia, 1982, p. 194)

As I share my final thoughts, I wonder how we can live Buscaglia's words. How do we teach trust? Can it be taught, or does it have to be earned through positive encounters? I begin anti-bias workshops with trust-building exercises. Through a series of activities I aim to create a space where students feel safe and comfortable sharing who they are, even when among strangers. We learn what we have in common and we begin to appreciate what is different among us. To understand the

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place of trust in the classroom, I return to the idea of relationship building. Nieto (1999) writes, "Teaching and learning are primarily about relationships. What happens in classrooms is first and foremost about the personal and collective connections that exist among the individuals who inhabit those spaces" (p. 130). These notions of trust, relationships, and, inherently, care, live in the words of my participants who have revealed an embodied way of knowing.

Levin (1985) helps me collect my thoughts and capture their interconnectedness: "Naturalism in moral education therefore requires of its teachers, and of the culture at large, a basic *trust* in the innate potential for goodness carried by the universal body" (p. 233). Trust, goodness, relationships, *others*, education: we must believe in the inherent goodness of our children and ourselves. Our trust allows us to establish relationships with the *other*, connections built on goodness, on humanity, on a desire to walk alongside the *other* because doing so is the "right" thing to do for the *other* and for the self.

Although my written journey is coming to an end, I remain mindful that my personal journey is still underway. I have spent the past nine months reading about *othering*, listening to the voices of my teachers, and writing about their words. In speaking recently to a professor who commented on how my selection of texts for an independent study on the history of education are all related to my research, I note that, in fact, they are not all so narrowly focused. The connection between these texts, however, is my mind's eye—a watchfulness for words that contribute to my understanding of *othering*. As I write my final words, I become keenly aware of my place in the world. As I move forward, I will continue to listen and look for moments,

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capturing images that offer insight into *othering*. I will continue to question what I see and hear, what I say and do. My horizons have been expanded, but I remain curious to discover what lies beyond.

APPENDIX A: COVER LETTER

Cover Letter for Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in my research study. The study will explore your experiences moving from *other* to *otherer,* from target to perpetrator, in instances of prejudice and discrimination. I plan to use five activities to open up my phenomenon, which will involve nine hours of your time. First, I will meet with you in a two hour one-on-one meeting. Second, I will ask you two spend about two hours on a written reflection. Third, we will meet again in a second one-on-one meeting. Fourth, I will ask you to spend one hour on a second written reflection, and finally, I will ask you to meet with the other study participants in a two-hour group meeting. All meetings will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place.

After I transcribe each of our meetings, I will forward you the transcript and will give you the opportunity to comment on whether the transcript accurately reflects your thoughts and feelings.

As a participant in the study you have the choice about whether or not your first name will be used. No last names will appear in the study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and all information you share will be confidential. You will not suffer any penalties if you decide not to answer certain questions during our conversations, or if you decide that you no longer want to participate.

By signing the attached consent form, you can agree to join me in this research study. I look forward to working with you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 301-580-3303 or via e-mail at <u>mojto@verizon.net</u>.

Sincerely,

Alison Milofsky Mojto

Project Title	BREAKING THE CYCLE OF HATE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS WHO MOVE FROM *OTHER* TO *OTHERER*
Why is this research being done?	This is a research project being conducted by Alison Milofsky Mojto at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the direction of Dr. Francine Hultgren. The purpose of this study is to gain some understanding of how teachers move from *other* to *otherer,* from target to perpetrator in situations of prejudice and discrimination, and how reflecting on such experiences can shape how they view and interact with their students. I am inviting you to participate in this research because you have that for at least five years and you currently teach a diverse student population in an elementary or secondary school.
What will I be asked to do?	The research procedures will take place over a three-month period and will include a one-on-one meeting with the researcher, written responses to questions, a second one-on-one meeting, a second set of written responses to questions, and a group meeting with all five study participants. The one-on-one meetings and the group meeting will be audio taped. All meetings will be determined by mutually agreed upon times and locations. Topics for each procedure include: Experiences when you have been on the receiving end of prejudice and discrimination (an *other*). Experiences when you have been prejudiced against or discriminated against someone else (an *otherer*). Your experiences teaching students whose backgrounds differ from yours.
What about confidentiality?	We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. Specifically, we will: 1. Not identify you by name in the data we collect, nor in any reports that are generated using the data. You will be assigned a pseudonym and your identity will not be directly identifiable. 2. The name of the City, school or grade level in which you teach will not be identified in reports generated as a part of this study. 3. All data files, including transcripts and observation notes, will be located on a password-protected computer. At the conclusion of the full study, these files will be destroyed. 4. Student identities will be carefully masked in the study's reports. In addition to using pseudonyms, the researchers will take care not to include other

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	identifying information that might be used to identify a particular study subject. This research involves making audiotapes of your conversations with the interviewer (one-on-one interviews) and the study's group discussion. Tape-recorded interviews and group discussions will be transcribed by the student investigator; no other person will have access to the tapes or their content. The tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the principal investigator's office on campus and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the full study. ___ I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study. ___ I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
What are the risks of this research?	There may be some risks associated with participating in this research study. The primary risk, albeit small, is the potential violation of confidentiality. Some of the information collected is may be personal or sensitive in nature. As noted above, the study includes processes and procedures to provide students with reasonable protections against a violation of confidentiality. In addition, you may feel uncomfortable when asked personal questions that might be difficult to answer. You may refuse to answer questions that make you uncomfortable or that you do not wish to answer.
What are the benefits of this research?	This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about how to prepare teachers to teach for diversity.
Do I have to be in this research? Can I stop participating at any time?	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.
What if I have questions?	This research is being conducted by Alison Milofsky Mojto at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact

Project Title	BREAKING THE CYCLE OF HATE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS WHO MOVE FROM *OTHER* TO *OTHERER*
	Alison Milofsky Mojto 4866 Chevy Chase Drive, Chevy Chase, MD, 20815 mojto@verizon.net; (301) 580-3303. The research is being supervised by Dr. Francine Hultgren Department of Education Policy Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742 fh@umd.edu; (301) 405-4562. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact **Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678** This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.
Project Title	BREAKING THE CYCLE OF HATE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS WHO MOVE FROM *OTHER* TO *OTHERER*
Statement of Age of Subject and Consent	Your signature indicates that: you are at least 18 years of age;, the research has been explained to you; your questions have been answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.
Signature and Date	**NAME OF PARTICIPANT**	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

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