

Self-Study and Diversity

Professional Learning

Volume 2

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Rationale:

This series purposely sets out to illustrate a range of approaches to Professional Learning and to highlight the importance of teachers and teacher educators taking the lead in reframing and responding to their practice, not just to illuminate the field but to foster genuine educational change.

Audience:

The series will be of interest to teachers, teacher educators and others in fields of professional practice as the context and practice of the pedagogue is the prime focus of such work. Professional Learning is closely aligned to much of the ideas associated with reflective practice, action research, practitioner inquiry and teacher as researcher.

Self-Study and Diversity

Deborah Tidwell, Linda Fitzgerald

University of Northern Iowa, USA



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Volume 1

Understanding and Developing Science Teachers Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Amanda Berry, John Loughran, and Pamela Mulhall

Monash University, Clayton, Australia

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Volume 2

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Deborah Tidwell and Linda Fitzgerald (eds.)

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SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

This series in Professional Learning has been initiated in response to the growing recognition of the importance of articulating professional knowledge. As such, it purposely distinguishes Professional Learning from Professional Development in as much as the notion of Professional Learning (in the intent of this series) is concerned with what professionals do and, as a consequence, learn about their own knowledge of practice. This is in contrast to the traditional view of Professional Development whereby such things as programs, curriculum change and/or “upskilling” are seen as things to be done, or more simply, delivered to participants. Hence, the notion of Professional Learning hinges on the role the individual takes in initiating and directing the nature of their own growth and development within their field of expertise, as opposed to being “trained” to perform particular tasks or changes to existing practice.

It is therefore inevitable that a focus on the immediate value to the practitioner of appropriate descriptions, outcomes and research of Professional Learning is important in creating new ways of accessing possibilities for such approaches to growth in understanding of the knowledge of practice. In so doing, it is anticipated that the theory-practice gap (Korthagen, 2001) might be challenged through a more meaningful integration of one with the other in the development of knowledge for, and in, practice. Bridging the theory-practice gap then becomes more likely if addressed through an approach such as that encapsulated in Professional Learning.

As Fullan (1993; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991) has made clear, real educational change requires change in people, and for that to be the case, the proposed idea, change of practice or innovation needs to offer something more than just the suggestion that such change will be meaningful. For an idea, innovation or suggestion for change to be valued, the notion of intelligibility, plausibility and fruitfulness (Hewson, 1981, 1982; Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzhog, 1982) offers one way of conceptualizing how to see and respond to the suggested form of change. For example, to be intelligible the innovations need to make sense and be understood, then, when personally applying it in one’s own practice it needs to be seen to be plausible, i.e., it must appear to be something that is a reasonable thing to do. However, to be fruitful, there must be a useful and meaningful outcome(s) that makes it “worth the effort.” Hence, understanding the importance of change being intelligible, plausible and fruitful is a helpful way of considering how Professional Learning might be recognized and built upon so that it invites an active response.

In essence then, focusing on personal practice and experience becomes a central aspect of change and a catalyst for genuine Professional Learning. Practitioners inquiring into their own practice can lead them to better understandings of the complexities of teaching and learning – for themselves and their students – and is perhaps more likely than if one is simply implementing others’ ideas, initiatives,

rules of curriculum, and so on; responding to one's own needs, concerns and issues is more likely to lead to change than responding to the exhortations, demands or impositions of others.

Portrayals of Professional Learning are then important, particularly when a central concern is a focus on teaching and learning. Opportunities for "seeing into" teaching and learning are high priorities in advancing knowledge of teaching and teacher education and in highlighting the complex nature of such work. Therefore, a most valuable aspect of Professional Learning is apparent when the development of ways of knowing, or the professional knowledge of teaching and learning, are made clear and explicit for oneself and others in the education community.

This series purposely sets out to illustrate a range of approaches to Professional Learning and to highlight the importance of teachers and teacher educators taking the lead in reframing (Schön, 1983) and responding to their practice, not just to illuminate the field but to foster genuine educational change. To that end this book, edited by Deborah Tidwell and Linda Fitzgerald, which launches the series, responds to all of the issues raised above in the way in which it portrays approaches to, and outcomes of, the Professional Learning of the authors who have contributed in the writing of this book.

It is not surprising, considering the centrality of the "self" in Professional Learning, that Tidwell and Fitzgerald have firmly situated their examination of Professional Learning in the methodology of self-study (Hamilton, 1998; Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004). Their particular focus on Diversity draws attention in teaching and teacher education to issues of equity and access and how crucial they are to shaping pedagogical practices.

Importantly, the manner in which they have conceptualized and formalized the approach to capturing and portraying Professional Learning in each chapter, despite the particular dimension of diversity under consideration, the focus on the dilemmas and responses of the given author(s) that are highlighted through self-study, illustrate well how the approach and concomitant Professional Learning apply beyond that immediate context. In so doing, the value of the Professional Learning documented in this book clearly "speaks" to all those interested in teaching and offers insights into the process of change and the quest for individuals to enhance their own understanding of practice.

The overall organization and structure of the book creates an array of "entry points" for the reader. Tidwell and Fitzgerald offer more detail in their introduction; however, the use of autobiographical research is a strong beginning point as it "draws the reader in" through life stories. Section two highlights the use of autobiographical method and brings into focus the importance of grounding such work in explicit theory. Section three moves into the classroom and makes clear the importance and value of illuminating the practices of teaching and learning. As has been a strong feature of much of the self-study literature, collaboration becomes a central theme for section four with further focus on the real world of classroom-based self-studies. Finally, they close with an interesting exploration of some of the artifacts and visual representations integral to some of the work of self-study which brings into sharp focus an aspect of Professional Learning that has

been important in creating new ways for considering how to articulate and share the developing knowledge of practice.

Throughout the book, Tidwell and Fitzgerald have also been concerned to ensure that what they are attempting to highlight and portray is useable and applicable in the work of others. Therefore, their careful and thoughtful approach to encouraging authors to include appropriate information on the use of particular strategies and suggested research and teaching practices is of great benefit to those concerned in seriously pursuing such work in their own practice settings.

It is anticipated that this series will be of interest to teachers, teacher educators and others in fields of professional practice where the context and practice of pedagogues is understood as being a prime focus of such work. Professional Learning, which draws on work in fields such as reflective practice, action research, practitioner inquiry, teacher as researcher and self-study, is about enhancing professional practice. However, for that to be the case, the work of those involved in practice settings needs to demonstrate a strong commitment to the development of knowledge and ways of developing and sharing that knowledge with others.

Through this book by Tidwell and Fitzgerald, the notion of Professional Learning is brought to the foreground by focussing attention on Diversity. It is most apt that such an important topic is the starting point of this series. Tidwell and Fitzgerald have developed a thoughtful and well conceptualised text that is an open invitation for readers to consider not only the work of these authors but also the implications for their own practice and the development of their own Professional Learning.

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LOUGHRAN

John Loughran
Monash University, Australia

INTRODUCTION

We are honored that this book is one of the first in the Professional Learning Series. Professional learning draws from a variety of professional practices, and in this book the authors situate their own professional learning through self-study methodology. *Self-study and Diversity* is a book about self-study of teaching and teacher education with equity and access as focal issues of practice. Chapters in this book have a shared orientation to diversity grounded in the acknowledgement that educators have a responsibility to address equity and access issues inherent in teaching. To that end, individual chapters address such areas of diversity as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and power, as well as broader areas of social justice, multiculturalism, and ways of knowing. Even though the focus in a chapter may be on one particular dimension of diversity, the dilemmas and responses of a teacher educator, elicited through self-study, can apply well beyond that immediate context. In these self-studies, educators take responsibility to define the problems of their practice and incorporate a variety of processes and methods to understand the dynamics and issues within the identified problems. The focus of these studies is toward change; in particular, these changes are made in relation to equity, access and social justice.

We invite the reader to listen closely to the stories that follow and to find connections to your own personal and professional lives. These self-studies demonstrate how professional learning occurs as an educator identifies and grapples with key issues in education. Listen in particular to what the authors offer at the end of each chapter as a practice to try out for yourself, either for self-study or for teaching for diversity. The authors provide a model of autonomy in taking charge of their own change processes. They identify a key dilemma in their practice, and through the use of self-study methods they further define what the issues are and try out a variety of solutions. It is through these deliberate studies of self and practice that they are informed to change. We are confident that as you read these self-studies you will find reflections of your own practice. We hope, as you travel with these authors in their journeys, that you find some new paths for change.

The chapters of the book are organized in five sections, with each section containing similar self-study approaches. These self-study approaches were specifically chosen by the researchers as effective avenues toward understanding the complex dynamics inherent in their diverse contexts.

Section one comprises autobiographical research, drawing readers in through life stories. Patrick Pritchard and Andre Mountain challenge the academy, presenting their self-study through performance. As Pritchard and Mountain state in their chapter,

We believe that teaching has a “soul” and that it is recognizable across all human differences. We have also affirmed the idea that our stories of

teaching and the truth they tell are more at home with the layered and varied forms of expression that don't rely merely on the literal qualities of language. (p.17)

In this same section, Timothy Spraggins appeals to "persons committed to becoming better educators and as educators committed to excavating internal prejudices that inform their work" (p.19). In highlighting the method used for his self-study, Spraggins explains, "If I am to successfully challenge schools on their institutional racism, I must first examine my own prejudices, planted deeply within my psyche" (p.42).

In section two, the autobiographical method is grounded in explicit theory. Monica Taylor and Lesley Coia use feminist theories through self-study to examine their practice in teacher education. As Taylor and Coia explain, "Our specific contribution lies in what happens in the interweaving of our stories: the reliance on the reflection that results from our stories being in dialogue, the role of the other in this dialogue adding validity, and analysis" (p.61). Their collaboration process applies shared authority:

When you remove the barriers that protect us from getting to know one another intimately in a classroom setting and begin to present the whole of ourselves things become messy and complicated. Shared authority forces all participants to come out of hiding and reveal their true colors. It is a gradual unmasking process. (p.64)

Victoria Perselli, in her chapter grounded in Marxian theory, asks,

How can I draw connections with the realities of the present social order, as understood through lived experience over time, that may well contradict my ideological positioning or prior beliefs (around concepts of poverty or social class, for example) and how these intersect with practice? (p.76)

In the final chapter in this section, Michael Vavrus engages himself and his students in multicultural autobiographical research. Calling his theory deep critical pedagogy, Vavrus pursues "issues at an emotional level where memories are recalled and consolidated and then related to their formation of teacher identities" (p.93).

Section three takes the reader into classrooms where practices of teaching and learning are illuminated. Helen Freidus and Linda Kroll work in institutions of higher education that have explicit commitments to teaching for social justice. In Freidus's chapter, she examines her efforts to develop habits of mind that support social justice and the challenges inherent in such efforts. "Finding the right framework that blends clear communication, support for anxiety, and unimpeded opportunities to take risks and follow one's own path poses a significant challenge for both faculty and students" (p.123). In her chapter, Linda Kroll gives evidence that "addressing the issues of social justice and equity in a teacher education program is notoriously difficult" (p.135). In her self-study Kroll examines issues of race and social justice in a teacher education program. Kathryn East

differentiates between Capital-D Diversity and small-d diversity to examine “issues of diversity in the classroom in ways that reinforce rather than challenge narrowed acceptance” (p.161). By investigating the private rules that she and her students use to judge each other’s behavior, East provides “a way to recognize behaviors that do not fit with espoused beliefs” (p.169).

In section four, collaboration is highlighted as the focal point within classroom-based self-studies. Linda Fitzgerald, Christine Canning and Catherine Miller present a critical examination through a collaborative self-study of their teaching practices in a teacher education program designed to prepare reflective practitioners for a democratic society. Key to their research is, “Identifying and exploring the so-called dispositions for such teaching [which] turned out to be much more challenging than we anticipated...Is there evidence that we are influencing the dispositions of our preservice teachers toward social justice?” (p.180) The second chapter in this section examines the effectiveness of a learning disabilities course in preparing teachers to work with children’s diverse ways of understanding and representing mathematical knowledge. Hafþís Guðjónsdóttir and Jónína Vala Kristinsdóttir share their self-study of a collaborative effort to teach teachers “to learn to respect the children’s way of thinking and give them the opportunity to develop their own understanding of mathematical concepts” (p.205). In the final chapter in this section, Ayani Good and Peter Pereira present the self-study of their collaborative teaching in a master’s program in teacher education. Central to their research is the examination of conflicts and tensions between the objective and subjective nature of teaching collaboratively, through the lens of race, gender, power and class. “The internal dynamics that are created are real, powerful, and an inevitable part of anyone’s teaching. Attention to these dynamics and the meanings they create can help us get on with the cognitive activities of the classroom” (p.215).

In section five, self-study is supported by the use of artifacts and visual representation. Morwenna Griffiths, Joseph Windle and Margaret Simms use photographs as key artifacts in their self-study of power relationships in their roles in a research unit of a university. Griffiths, Windle and Simms found the use of visual representation enabled them to confront “the often hidden power-relations and structures of privilege which underpin our everyday practices within teacher education” (p.229). In the second chapter, Mary Manke and Jerry Allender provide insights into the use of artifacts as tools for self-study of practice. “As a humanistic educator, I seek to confront without creating discord – a worthy goal, but not always attainable. But through this reflection on a group of artifacts, I feel that my concerns and understanding of diversity issues have grown” (p.257). In the final chapter, Deborah Tidwell presents her use of illustrative nodal moments as a tool for self-study, both for herself as a teacher educator and for her students as preservice teachers. She shares her use of nodal moments as data for examining the instructional context of practice and as a focus for eliciting different ways of knowing and perceiving the context and dynamics of practice. Tidwell found the “layers of cultural differences” that emerged in nodal moment discussions “became an important part of the nodal moment process” (p.268).

There is not one method for designing a self-study. As Fitzgerald, Canning and Miller point out in their chapter, “each self-study project varies as a function of the individual(s) involved, the kinds of practices in focus, and the purpose for which the study is undertaken” (p.175). That said, more than one of the self-studies in this book share similar methods. Indeed, the last section of the book is organized by the contribution the chapters give to developing self-study methodology for data collection. Likewise, autobiography and autoethnography are used in several of the studies. Contrary to the expectation that something prefaced by “self-” will be individual in focus, approximately two-thirds of the chapters depended on collaboration in some form. While there were many methods for designing the self-studies, to one extent or another all engaged in reframing and reconceptualizing their practice. This reframing and reconceptualizing facilitates professional learning through an active change process by which the researcher, informed by the past (through research, literature and experience) examines present contexts and dynamics to enlighten future practice. In such a model, research study is continual and ongoing. It is important to note that every chapter in this book reports on research in progress.

Across the chapters are recurring themes that arise from these self-studies. That learners are active agents of their own transformation and change applies not only to the preservice and inservice teachers being taught, but equally to the teacher educators who are carrying out the self-studies. Many of the authors would agree that it is not enough to teach by telling, but that the teacher must model the practice and design a pedagogy that enables the students to practice what is taught. To that end, many of the self-studies involved examining the mismatch between beliefs and practice. Such research opens up the individual to vulnerability by giving up privacy, and by sharing, both in collaboration with others (co-authors, co/autoethnography, co-construction with students in classroom) and in public presentations and writing for publications. In self-study, vulnerability is one of a number of emotions that are recognized, examined and embraced for their power in the change process. Issues of power and of privilege also recur across the self-studies, evident in dilemmas that arise for practitioners who aspire to democratic and caring classrooms. Whether explicit or implicit, all of the chapters address issues of equity and social justice.

Editors’ Note: We are guided in our rules for usage of race-related terms by our contributor Timothy Spraggins.

I capitalize African American, Black, and People of Color...These terms, like many others, symbolize the struggles, the intentional genocides, untold atrocities, the smothered voices, and still the mystic survival of peoples who were not supposed to survive; furthermore, these terms (like others) represent an ugly profile of America’s personality and history. To not acknowledge either as often as possible equates to a complicitous relationship in helping America maintain a partially fictitious personality...I likewise capitalize “White” in reference to race, mainly for its role in these struggles and life-stories of Negroes and Blacks and other oppressed peoples around the world. (p.20)

INTRODUCTION

Deborah Tidwell
University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, USA

Linda May Fitzgerald
University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, USA

PATRICK PRITCHARD AND ANDRE MOUNTAIN

WOODSTOCK TO HIP-HOP: CONVERGENT LIFELINE AND THE PEDAGOGY OF PERSONAL QUEST

THE IDEA

This is a story about two teachers telling stories, who in the process had a bright idea. The progression of the idea went something like this: The teaching profession is currently under tremendous pressure from forces determined to make it *accountable* in much the same way as a sales corps might find itself pressured by management to meet quotas. The pressure from this wrong thinking is threatening to dehumanize teaching, and consequently, persons who enter the profession for the joy of teaching children are leaving. And, as teaching is being reshaped as a technocratic vocation, many of the persons who remain in teaching do so for non-humanistic reasons, i.e., they believe that good teaching is primarily following the right script (a dangerous *weapon of mass instruction*).

In order to speak out against the madness and to speak for *the person* in teaching and learning, we thought that a performance event, one where art, humanity, diversity and identity were the frame, was a more appropriate medium than a traditional paper presentation. We wanted this to be about the personal and situational intersecting with the professional so that a multitude of possibilities for effective and transformative teaching result. It would be about Woodstock, Hip-Hop and the journey where they meet up with Joni Mitchell, and emotionally disturbed students, and hope dealers, and Lauren Hill, and Merrill Lynch, and Jesus, and cemeteries, and kicking ass. It would be about a middle-aged White guy with memories and a young Black guy with hope for the future, and about the teaching attitude that energizes them both. It would ultimately be about the convergent paths that we walk when teaching *calls* us and we listen, and about the *strong poet* within us that we want to keep alive (Rorty, 1989).

Andre is 30 years old, unmarried, and comes to teaching with a B. A. in history and career experience in finance. He acquired his certification through an alternative teacher preparation program designed to place qualified college graduates on a track leading to a Master's of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education. During the orientation phase of this program Patrick was speaking to the class about making history come alive to students. He performed a traditional

song, accompanied by guitar and Andre remembers thinking “He’s bringing himself into his teaching. He’s being a person. That means I can be myself and be a teacher at the same time.” Andre is considered *a prize* by his principal because he represents a rarity in education; a young, Black, male elementary school teacher. His school is well over 90% African American, and Andre is the only male teacher, so he is often called upon to be more than his job description strictly delineates. He commented to Patrick one day, “Sometime, I’d just like to be Andre the teacher and not Andre, the young Black male role-model teacher.” He also writes poetry and performs Hip-Hop music. His most recent album is titled, *The Negro School Project* (Mountain, 2002).

Patrick is a 55-year-old White male who comes to college teaching via 1960s idealism, a 14-year career as a carpenter, and 15 years teaching in special education. He directs the program that Andre is a part of. He is a musician as well. He considers himself to be an alternatively prepared teacher because of his background. He’s convinced that his diverse life experiences have been invaluable in his work preparing future educators to face the changing demands of teaching confidently. He believes that when teachers shut the doors to their classrooms they have a moral obligation to teach to the needs of the child and not primarily to the demands of the state.

We saw our project as essentially self-study. We wanted to use our art and stories to explore what it was about teaching that we loved (and hated). We wanted to explore what it was about our very different lives that made us want to stand together in front of our colleagues and “cry out.” This study would fit into the category of “identity-oriented research” as described by Louie, Drevdahl, Purdy and Stackman (2003, p. 152), but part of what we would examine would be the possibility that teacher stories may require a more complex form of expression than the typical academic paper in order to be true to the tellers. Dyson and Genishi (1994) suggest that,

Storytellers often craft the sensual and metaphoric, rather than the literal properties of speech, as they work to convey their feelings about their evaluation of the world. Feelings, after all, are not reducible to specific words, but are often conveyed best through the musical and image-making features of language by rhythm and rhyme, figures of speech and revoiced dialogue. (p. 4)

PLANNING

At our first planning meeting, it became clear that, if this project (preparing to present at an education conference) was going to be true to our own teaching lives, it would have to be more than a typical reading of an academic paper. We concluded that we would be better able to convey the complexity and layeredness of our journey if the presentation itself contained some of the affective and artistic elements that are central to our own stories of teaching. So, we decided that this would be a dramatic spoken word event with live music and autobiographical vignettes.

For months we met regularly to edit, refine, rehearse, and learn how to tell our stories to each other. We discovered the value of trust as we told stories fraught with vulnerability, self-doubt, proud successes, and strangeness. We experienced what James Olney (1997) refers to in his article, “Transmogrifications of Life-Writing,” that “Life is a text whose living is its reading so we go on incessantly returning to the texts of our lives, revising, reinterpreting, and narrating again the story so often rehearsed, in the mind if not on paper” (p. 555). We desired to utilize more than the literal aspects of storytelling since our lives have more dimensions than words alone can accurately describe.

THE EVENT

When the day finally arrived for us to make our presentation we were full of excitement and concern. The conference events had not been well attended and our assigned room, built to accommodate several hundred, had some thirty folding chairs in the middle, half of them empty. We did have, what we would later identify as, a strange exultation in what we were doing. We believed in this project and would complete it on that basis, not on the basis of audience size or response. Did we mention that half of the 15 attendees were supportive friends?

What follows is the script for our performance. Please remember that it is written to be *performed* and not read. Use of your imagination may be required.

Patrick: Recently I was speaking to a colleague who was an outstanding middle school principal, about the dilemma of high stakes testing and unreasonable standards that govern the teaching profession. I had slipped into my idealistic ‘60s persona and was waxing very righteous on the issue. She shook her head and chuckled. “Patrick, don’t you know that testing and standards are *gods*, sprung fully formed from the head of our governor.” (He was not reelected). She has that wonderful irreverence that characterizes so many old pedagogical warriors. She believes that the chief duty of any principal worth her salt is to keep the wolves from the district office away from her teachers so that they can do what they do best: build meaningful relationships with their students and teach them from the basis of those relationships. My friend’s school was featured on the PBS special *School* as one of the extraordinary middle schools in America while many other schools in her district languished like sinners in the hands of an angry god. Testing, standards: new divinities for a potent form of radical fundamentalism dedicated to the destruction of the liberal faith of John Dewey.

These pedagogical deities have extended their dominion into the sleepy little kingdom of teacher education as well. They have hard, angular names and issue decrees and commandments that Teacher Education departments must obey or else reap the whirlwind.

Voice (as from heaven): YOU!

PRITCHARD & MOUNTAIN

Patrick: Me?

Voice: YES, YOU. THE ONE THEY CALL PROFESSOR.

Patrick: Uh, I didn't think we had morning announcements in college. Who is this?

Voice: I AM YOUR, HOW SHALL I SAY (chuckles) HIGHER POWER.

Patrick: You mean...do you really mean...I mean, I'm actually hearing the voice of...

Voice: I AM NCATE! HEAR THE COMMANDMENTS THAT I GIVE UNTO YOU THIS DAY. SIX I GIVE TO YOU AND THEY SHALL BE UNTO YOU STANDARDS. KEEP THEM HOLY AND DO NOT TRY TO FUDGE OR I WILL BUST THEE. MY SERVANTS SHALL COME TO THEE AND THEY SHALL MAKE THEE WORK DAY AND NIGHT AND YEA, EVEN WHEN THOU THINKEST THOU SHOULD BE TEACHING THY STUDENTS, THOU SHALT INSTEAD GIVE THY ENERGIES TO ME.

STANDARD 1

CANDIDATE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND DISPOSITION

THY CANDIDATES PREPARING TO WORK IN SCHOOLS AS TEACHERS OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL PERSONNEL SHALL KNOW AND DEMONSTRATE THE CONTENT, PEDAGOGICAL, AND PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND DIS...

Patrick: Wait, please O' mighty NCATE! As a mere mortal, I cannot bear to hear all of thy commandments, and please do not think me irreverent or disrespectful, but how shall I have the time to obey my calling to teach seeing that thou hast honored me with the holy burden of the SIX STANDARDS? Am I not serving thee by giving myself to my students, striving to plan and present lessons that not only teach them facts but teach them how to live well, to be free and to be wide-awake to the great world in which they live?

Voice: THOU HAST UTTERED BLASPHEMY SMALL ONE!! HOW DARE THOU SPEAKEST THE IDEAS OF THE HERETIC MAXINE GREENE IN MY PRESENCE!

Patrick: We are not against standards that help us in our work.

Andre: Nor are we against testing, that is, reasonable forms of assessment that are actually valid for determining a student's depth of learning.

Patrick: But we do not think stricter standards can create effective teachers.

Andre: And we do not believe that normed achievement tests can measure that which needs educating in a child.

Patrick: There are many ways to prepare a person to be a good teacher.

Andre: And there are even more ways for those teachers to create a classroom environment that is a true Kindergarten, a garden where curiosity and discovery flourish and children grow up like strong plants and beautiful flowers.

Patrick: J.B. Priestly (1894-1984) once wrote,

To find the child's delight added to your own,

So that there is now a double delight

Seen in the glow of trust and affection,

This is happiness

Patrick: And we might add, "This is teaching."

I DEAL HOPE

Andre: Teaching can't be taught.

People teach it, but in actuality, it can't be taught. We talk about the *methods* to get kids to understand, but I don't think the average cat can do this. I don't think a textbook, a few months of student teaching and a degree equals an effective teacher. You can't convince me otherwise. This is a profession for a chosen few. It takes a certain temperament, a certain disposition, to deal with the moods, attitudes and personal problems--and I'm just talking about my co-workers right now--not to mention the kids. We breathe life into a corpse called poverty. This cat from Atlanta once said, "I don't deal dope, I deal hope."

Hope Dealers work in the inner city.

Hope Dealers get our kids hooked on hope at an early age.

Hope Dealers have a major effect on how far our kids get in life.

I'm a hope dealer.

I watch kids get high on *Hardy Boy Mysteries* and Lauryn Hill lyrics.

Lately, my class has been writing goals for the year, the month and the week.

Yasmine wrote, I'd like to learn how to speak English better, and write better in Spanish.

James wrote, I want to stop getting in trouble and make only one F this six weeks.

Sadiya wrote, This week I don't want to talk so much.

PRITCHARD & MOUNTAIN

Finally, in the neatest print you've ever seen, Will wrote, I want to start writing everything in cursive.

I'm not a drug dealer on a mission to give kids what will ultimately ruin their potential, but I try to give kids the hope and the vision to aspire to even greater things without the risk, the detriment and the downfalls that go along with the other side of things. We've got to make academics as attractive as the streets. Whether you realize it or not, there's a war going on. We're involved in a war for the minds of this generation. You can fight with TV. You can battle with Hip-Hop, and you can stand in the face of poverty all you want, but I tell you this: it's easier to make allies than fight a war.

WOODSTOCK AS A POST-DROP OUT, PRESERVICE FOUNDATIONS OF
EDUCATION COURSE

'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free,
'Tis a gift to come down where we ought to be.
And when we find ourselves in the place just right
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
To turn, turn, will be our delight
'Till by turning, turning we come round right.

Shaker Traditional

Patrick: I do not ever remember considering teaching as a profession before I had reached the age of 30. Hell, the day I dropped out of college (it was at the end of spring semester 1970) was the happiest day of my life up to that point. Having successfully evaded the draft I had no real reason for staying in college. My dream was to start *real life* as soon as possible. This included hitchhiking from my home in San Antonio, Texas to California just to see what I would find, staying there for an indeterminate period of time, then maybe learning how to be a carpenter or a farmer. I wanted to build things and I wanted to grow things. I wanted to have time to sit on my front porch and read good books. My emerging philosophy was to do as much good and as little harm to everyone and everything as possible. The thing that most frightened me at this time of my life was that I might get distracted and forget, as Henry David Thoreau (1854) had put it, "to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life" (p. 60).

So I went to California. It was there that I discovered how much of a hometown boy I was. It wasn't that I didn't like dancing naked around a blazing bonfire several thousand feet above Yosemite Valley with a group of folks who closely resembled the Charles Manson family. It's just that I found out that there was this deep streak of normalcy in me that I really wanted to nurture. This could not be easily done in certain parts of California in the summer of 1970. What I wanted was to see if I could be normal without being *straight*.

The Shaker song *Simple Gifts* was my introduction to the idea that life is a process, a 70-year dance with endless variations, always coming back to the original theme. I've taught this song to dozens of my students over the years and many of them have told me that the words made them realize that life is made up of cycles, and that means other chances to do better. I'm still hoping for myself that, "by turning, turning we come round right."

\$4.00 COFFEE AND A NEWSPAPER

Andre:

*We the willing,
Led by the unknowing,
Are doing the impossible for the ungrateful.
We have done so much,
With so little for so long,
That we are now qualified,
To do anything with nothing. (unknown)*

At 13 I was qualified to do nothing.

Though drawn to literature and history, I'd been encouraged by a middle school science teacher to enroll in a Health Sciences Magnet High School in Augusta. I spent the next 4 years wearing a yellow and white uniform and learning about cavity prevention, dental x-rays and how to use a physician's desk reference. Other than the table tennis team and that group of cats who always arm wrestled in the cafeteria, there were no organized sports, so I often wonder how different my high school experience might have been had I attended a regular high school.

I think I privately nurtured a love for literature and history, though it never seemed to mesh with what the people around me considered a career. It was always out on the periphery of what was "really going to pay off" in the long run.

That notion was so engrained in me that it wasn't until adulthood that I was determined to pursue my passion for reading and learning as a profession. At 25, working as a highly paid bean counter, I'd begun to outgrow my cubicle at Merrill Lynch. I was one of those cubicle zombies filling the train stations with the morning paper and a cup of \$4.00 coffee in hand at 8:45 a.m. After

excitement of college--the discussions, debates, the poetry readings and all the eclectics of academia--my life had become this one gigantic routine.

I encounter some veteran teachers who inspire me.
Their complaints inspire me.
Their cynicism inspires me.
But others remind me of the days in my cubicle.
I'd complain, but I'd return each day for my misery.

I'm certain that some of the future's best teacher in this country are working in the business world, sitting in cubicles right now reading newspapers, drinking a \$4.00 cup of coffee and thinking "What the hell am I doing with my life?"

I'm even more certain that some of the worst teachers in this country are standing in front of a group of students at this very moment and thinking, "What the hell am I doing with my life?"

I could be in an office somewhere drinking a \$4.00 cup of coffee and reading the newspaper.

Question: What Would Jesus Do If He Were Being Reviewed for Reaccreditation?

Patrick: I had this religious experience, and as a result I moved to a commune. Well, what did you expect? I was married at that time, had three children under the age of six, and in 1979 we all moved to an amazing place called the Bruderhof, in the mountains of western Pennsylvania. The people there considered themselves Christians, but they were very anti-religious. They had been driven out of Germany by the Nazis, driven out of England by the government at the start of the war, lived in the Paraguayan jungles for 20 years and finally, in the early '60s moved to the northeastern United States. What a group they were! Basically, I fell in love with these people. And if I fell in love with the people in general, I fell hopelessly in love with their school. The school teachers talked about Comenius, Pestalozzi and Froebel as if they had tea with them the day before. The school day looked something like this: Arrive at school at 8am. Go to the auditorium for *Kinderschaft*, a time of singing, sharing and reading aloud that set the tone for the day. Be dismissed to the classrooms where everyone worked very hard on academic work until noon. Eat lunch with your class and then play or explore outside for an hour, then end the day working on projects either at the school or in the adult workshop, where a thriving wooden toy business had its home. My children went to that school. I was a happy father.

For various reasons, my experience of utopian socialism did not last. That really is another story. What did last was the nagging sense that if I could just be the kind of teacher who did for kids what the Bruderhof school did for them I would ask for nothing more in life. In 1981 I returned to college after 11 years of working with the wood to learn how to teach kids.

COWBOY HATS & BAGGY PANTS

Andre: What is Hip-Hop and how is it influencing kids?

Well, at first glance, most people would characterize it as rap; the music, the videos, the glamour and the vulgarity, along with the violence that surrounds young people.

In its simplest terms, it's the lens through which we view the world. It's lifestyle that dictates how I interact with my co-workers, my students and my family.

More precisely, Hip-Hop is a collective consciousness that gives the oppressed the power to define themselves and develop a sense of self-worth. Introduced in the streets of New York during the late '70s, it's the culture with which I most closely identify. I try to represent it in its truest form. I defend it at roundtables and I build bridges to it.

Cowboy hats: they make us think of the West, the South even.

We think of the lifestyle that goes along with that:
natural living and hardworking men.

We don't always think of Jesse James or the outlaws who made their living robbing stagecoaches and banks during the era, but we know that there were good and bad elements in the culture.

Baggy pants: what do you think of?

I see adolescents in a hallway at a school or walking down a street with a certain attitude.

I hear rap or Hip-Hop music in the background and I wonder if the two are inherently linked. Well, know this; all in Hip-Hop don't wear baggy pants. All with baggy pants aren't part of Hip-Hop. Teachers and students often get confused when this comes up in a conversation, because of the negative but popular images that surround our culture, Hip-Hop culture. Notice I used the word surround. To surround something is not to become a part of it. To surround something is to block the view of what's at the core so that bystanders only see that which is surrounding.

So you see Hip-Hop being surrounded by thugs.

So you see Hip-Hop being surrounded by scantily clad women.

So you see Hip-Hop being surrounded by drug abuse.

So you see Hip-Hop being surrounded by kids who can't see what it's really about.

So you see adults who despise Hip-Hop.

We teach to clarify with the understanding that teaching transcends the standards. It infiltrates that life that starts at 4:00 p.m.

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE WITH THE SOUND OF TEACHING

Patrick: I was not prepared to teach special education. My degrees were in Liberal Arts and History for Secondary Education. However, I don't think there was one job opening for high school social studies in the entire United States that year. Then I got a call from an old Mennonite friend of mine asking me to join him, his two brothers and his father in working at something described as a therapeutic wilderness camp for emotionally disturbed boys. Being Mennonites, they had this strong ethic of service that I couldn't help being drawn to. Their entire family had moved to the upstate of South Carolina from Virginia and bought a thousand acres of land, with the conviction that they could take troubled kids, live together with them in the woods, and in doing so, help them to get their lives straightened out. None of these people had even graduated from high school. The father of the group, whom everyone called "Grandad," grew up Amish, and only went through the fifth grade. But they bought the land, drove to the State Department of Social Services office in Columbia and sweet-talked the folks there into giving them a license to start a "moderate management treatment facility." Grandad later told me that what really got them the license was that he promise the DSS director to bring him some of his wife's home made apple fritters, which he insisted on calling "critters." They really started things this way. Love, faith and hard work was what did it. And the apple critters, of course.

Fair Play Camp School is, and has been for years, the most successful youth treatment center in South Carolina. My job (I did take the offer because I liked the idea of working in the woods) was to be the Educational Coordinator for the camp. This entailed me being hired by the local school district but working out of the camp. Since I didn't have a degree in special education, I enrolled in a graduate program at Clemson University, which was nearby.

I visited camp recently when I was asked to come and spend the day reintroducing the boys to the Old Maxwell Cemetery, the site of my dissertation project. It is an antebellum African American burial ground on the camp property. It is a place of memories, a few of them discovered by my students and me, and probably many more yet to be discovered. When I arrived at camp I was met by the Explorers, the treatment group comprising 9 and 10 year olds. A little boy named Daniel asked me "Did you write the big black book Chief Pat?" (Therapeutic staff persons are called chief). "What big black book?" "You know, that big one about the cemetery that you had to write to get your doctor's license," he said. "That was a really interesting book! The whole group read it and we know all about Tenus Maxwell, and Ol' Primus and Pompey Keels." These were names of former slaves buried in that lonely hilltop graveyard.

We hiked up the old road bed to the cemetery. It had recently been cleaned up by one of the treatment groups, but still had that air of mystery that only

truly sacred places have. We walked to the grave of Tenus Maxwell and looked at the inscription:

Tenus Maxwell
Born 1818
Died May 1885
Husband of M. Maxwell
For 20 years a Baptist preacher
He died in full hope of eternal rest

"Was he a great man Chief Pat?" one of the boys asked. "Well, he was a good man. We know that. And that's probably a lot better than being a great man." We just stood there quietly for a while: a college professor and a group of so-called emotionally disturbed boys who had read his dissertation for God's sake -- and liked it! Unable to speak, eyes brimming, filled with thankfulness, I thought "I am a teacher."

A favorite camp song written by the folk singer Bob Franke (1982) expresses the sentiments of many of the camp boys as they hope for a life of goodness for themselves someday. It is called *Alleluia, the Great Storm is Over*.

*The thunder and lightening gave voice to the night
A little lame child cried aloud in his fright
Hush little baby, a story I'll tell
Of love that has vanquished the powers of hell.
Alleluia, the Great Storm is over
Lift up your wings and fly.
Alleluia, the Great Storm is over
Lift up your wings and fly.
Sweetness in the air and justice on the wind
Laughter in the house where the mourners have been
The deaf shall have music, the blind have new eyes
The standards of death taken down by surprise.
Alleluia...
Release for the captives, an end to the wars
New streams in the desert, new hope for the poor
The little lame children shall dance as they sing
And play with the bears and the lions in spring.
Alleluia...
Hush little baby let go of your fears
The Lord loves his own and your mother is here
The child fell asleep as the lanterns did burn
The mother sang on 'till her bridegroom's return.
Alleluia...
(Text printed by permission of the artist)*

THE MOB

Andre: The plan was to have a high level meeting of the organization to discuss problems. Cronies were flown in to weigh in on where we stood and make sure that we understood their positions. Dark suits and handshakes set the mood. As could be expected, security was thick. There were representatives from all of the local families present, and a few new recruits as well. It was a meeting of the best new minds, if you will. It was a scene taken right out of an Al Pacino film. In this case though, we're not in Miami; it's Macon, and the setting is the Wesleyan College campus where a visit from the governor was preceded by a series of elaborate security checks. As we asked him questions we witnessed an exercise in back peddling that would have made Trent Lott blush.

- When will class sizes go down?
- Will early childhood education be classified a critical needs area?

He had no real answers.

As the Don left to board his chopper, we were all a little unclear as to what had just happened.

So far removed from the realities of everyday school life in urban communities, the education powerbrokers appear as mob figures wielding enormous power over the lives of teachers, students, administrators and even parents.

They give the speeches.
They shake hands, but
we make the rounds.
We give hope.
We teach kids.

TEACHING AND DANCING

Patrick: With shiny new doctorate in hand I went from teaching seriously emotionally disturbed boys to teaching in a women's college, Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia. At Wesleyan I have found a community of scholar-practitioners and future educators that challenge me to hold to the humane and transformative vision for education that I have learned over the last 20 years. My students remind me every day not to give in to the forces that seek to reduce teaching to recipes. Not that I have ever wanted to, but the gods are powerful and do not think or behave as we mortals. Esme Raji Codell (1999) in her book, *Educating Esme: Diary of a Teacher's First Year*, said that she wanted "to kick pedagogical ass" (p. 19) in memory of her former supervising teacher. That's what I want to do every day in memory of all that my students have taught me through the years. I owe it to them. I

don't know if this approach will reform education, but it may at least keep me from becoming irrelevant.

And another thing: as a college professor I have met people like Andre, who though coming from a very different background, shares the conviction that it is the passionate individual that truly makes a difference in the classroom. Hip-Hop. Woodstock. We're all headed along converging paths on this extraordinary journey of teaching.

Who am I to think I can teach? When I find myself wanting to scream inwardly over the increasing demands placed on my work by god-like bureaucrats, it is not because I have a better plan. It is not because I foolishly believe that kids would automatically learn more if accountability was taken out of the professional equation. I know that there are some teachers that, left to their own devices would do nothing in the classroom but distribute worksheets. But I do know some things-- just a few important things--and that is why I dare to teach. I know that in the teaching environment there are portals, as it were, to the kind of life and energy that I have spent my entire life seeking. I know that if one works very hard, looks right into the eyes of student, embraces both the tragic and the ecstatic elements of the teaching life, that these portals seem to open in spite of apparent failures in us or in the system. And when they do open, something flows in that wakes us all from our slumber, and changes our plodding to a kind of dance. Yes, that is it. I teach so that I may have someone to dance with. And it is the dancing along those lovely convergent lines that defines what we do.

LAST OF A DYING BREED

Andre: People asked me how it felt to be the only male in a group of nearly 20 new teaching candidates.

People ask me how it feels to be the only male in a school of nearly 45 staff members.

People ask me how it feels to work in a profession that is typically thought to be for females.

Everyday life for a male elementary school teacher is very similar to what life is like for all African American males. There are few things that you need to be constantly aware of:

Rule #1: You won't always enjoy the fringe benefits of the majority. Don't feel left out when you don't get a Victoria Secret's gift bag at Christmas. Don't get excited about a change in the dress code regarding the open toe shoe policy.

Rule #2: People may expect you to know how to do certain things that you may not know. All African Americans can't dance, rap or play basketball. All male teachers can't check your oil, lift refrigerators or turn rebellious youth into Scholars.

Rule #3: Expect to be under constant scrutiny by the people around you.
In other words, get used to being watched, criticized and misunderstood,
misquoted, stereotyped, underestimated, devalued and wrongfully accused,
possibly in the same 24-hour period.

Sometimes I feel like the last of a dying breed: the male elementary school
teacher.

We'd like to close with a song I wrote to illustrate how my love of Hip-Hop
music and culture and my love of teaching blend together. We are teachers
and we teach from who we are and what we know.

When In The Booth
Andre Mountain (2002)

Hook (2x)
When in the booth,
I speak the truth indeed,
When in the classroom,
I'm trying to nurture seeds,
Take a glimpse of a scene,
In the hallways,
Everlasting, eternal,
Always.

Take a walk on the wild side,
The where we don't smile side,
I teach kids the gritty side of life.
It's not a PG 13,
On your TV screen,
Whatever I see,
Is exactly what's seen.
Every single day I'm using night vision.
On a life saving mission,
With my teacher's edition.
I read the holy books,
I changed and then repented,
Now I'm teaching kids,
Paranoid schizophrenic.
Time's running out,
On all these ifs and maybes.
Crack's in the sidewalk,
But more crack's in babies.
Cameras in the hallways,
Watching these kids moves.

*Mind's dull,
But they bringing sharp knives to school.
Take lives,
It's cool,
But just don't take mine,
I still gotta make babies,
And a wife to find.
27, 5'11" living in ghetto heaven,
East Macon crime side,
See the news at 11.*

*Hook (2X)
When in the booth,
I speak the truth indeed,
When in the classroom,
I'm trying to nurture seeds,
Take a glimpse of a scene,
In the hallways,
Everlasting, eternal,
Always.*

*9...8...7...that's how we count the bars,
And we sample trumpets, violins,
And string guitars,
Becoming parents too early,
So we're paying the price,
Swallowed up by the ghetto,
Just like kids at Rice,
So at night I scribble rhymes,
Writing songs in my pad,
Day by day I try to clean up after,
Dead beat dads,
It's a sad situation we're facing,
Descendants of the plantation,
Still slave for the nation.
Might need textbooks to see,
What page we're on,
Reading Shakespeare and novels,
By Khalil Gibran,
We study sciences that seem to go,
Sight unseen,
And live in neighborhoods that become,
Homes to fiends.
It's a daily operation in this Hip-Hop game,
Writing rhymes,*

PRITCHARD & MOUNTAIN

*Doing shows,
Trying to chase some fame,
The more money that we saw,
The more problems came,
They try to stress Andre,
And set the mountains in flames.*

*Hook (2X)
When in the booth,
I speak the truth indeed,
When in the classroom,
I'm trying to nurture seeds,
Take a glimpse of a scene,
In the hallways,
Everlasting, eternal,
Always.*

REFLECTIONS

As Andre uttered the last word of his rap and we stood there together facing our tiny audience of friends and curiosity seekers we felt that whatever the response, we had spoken well. There had been an immediacy present in our “act.” It was a plea, performed in the same spirit that made us love teaching. It had urgency and passion in it. It was like good teaching in that it was a transformative moment backed up by intense preparation. Without going into too much detail, the performance was very well received. A colleague who was present said “What’s best for me about the presentation is how it bridges Hip-Hop and folk music in a way that tells a grander story; revealed to the audience are the many spaces in between the two, not limited to music that might help anyone of us with our own particular despair and hope.” (Allender, personal communication, November 19, 2003).

Since that first event we have presented our project in two other settings, an urban education conference attended by teacher education students and K-12 teachers, and a self-study conference attended by teacher educators and educational theorists. The audience response has been similar at all three events; the *language* of personal and artistic presentation is a powerful *weapon* to combat the anti-humanistic forces intent on destroying democratic education with mindless forms of compliance and accountability. Washington (1996) bears witness when she states:

Transformation of the social order begins with an act of imagination that elevates a startling dream of change above the intimidating presence of things as they are. Further, if such dreams are passionate and clear, and if they can call a great many people into their service, they may ultimately give shape to the future. In this way, the future vibrancy of our profession depends on the ignition of bold ideas, passionately conveyed. (p. 32)

As we continue to use our project as a vehicle for self-study we are drawn back to the notion that we teach because we have discovered that we share a longing expressed by William H. Schubert (1999) as he describes his calling to teach.

I knew somehow that there was something deeper, more wonderful, and mysterious than mere instructing and testing — something that resided in the personal encounter with each emerging life that made the real connection between teaching and what I wanted to do in life. This knowledge filled me with enthusiasm. I discovered that I aspire to help others create their lives. I wanted a high calling in life and could think of none higher than that of helping new generations meet the world. (p. 4)

In the telling of our stories of teaching, we have become ethnographers of our own lives and the subcultures we represent. Patrick had never particularly cared for Hip-Hop music, but now he understands how it empowers Andre to teach. Andre's perception of the Woodstock Generation was that of idealistic, but clueless White kids gone wild. He now understands that the '60s were part of the same tide of change that produced the Civil Rights Movement.

We have not attempted to merge our teacher selves in the use of the word *convergent*. We use it as a metaphor to describe the diverse teacher identities that can bring power and hope to students as long as those identities advocate "help[ing] others create their lives" (Schubert, 1999, p. 4). We recognize in each other evidence of an approach to teaching that recognizes differences such as race, culture and age, but at the same time transcends these important aspects of personal identity. Our view of the humanistic teacher is summed up in the Dutch word *mensenkennis*, a word loosely defined by Van Manen (1996) as

a kind of wisdom about how people are and how they tend to act or react in specific situations — the significance of people's frailties, strengths, difficulties, inclinations, and life circumstances. It is a practical type of knowledge of how people's actions relate to motives, intentions, emotions, feelings, and moods. (p. 138)

Van Manen further states, "It is only in certain relational contexts that the thinking life, the developing identity, the moral personality, the emotional spirit, the educational learning, and sociopsychological maturing of the young person occurs" (p. 141). We believe that teaching has a *soul* and that it is recognizable across all human differences. We have also affirmed the idea that our stories of teaching and the truth they tell are more at home with the layered and varied forms of expression that do not rely merely on the literal qualities of language.

Finally, learning to tell our stories in the truest ways has helped us to trust ourselves and not be intimidated or embarrassed to approach teaching in ways that are counter to the prevailing pedagogical fundamentalism. It's like we said in the presentation, we want to "kick pedagogical ass!"

PRITCHARD & MOUNTAIN

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Patrick Pritchard
Wesleyan College, Macon, Georgia, USA

Andre Mountain
Monte Sano Elementary, Augusta, Georgia, USA

TIMOTHY SPRAGGINS

**A SELF-STUDY ON RACED AND GENDERED
DISCOURSE: SEEKING INTERNALIZED
OPPRESSIONS AND PRACTICES**

HOW TO READ THIS STUDY

This is a self-study on my discourse with African American male students. Before delving into the specifics, however, I think it is important to provide the reader with a context for the study. In addition, I provide explanations and even definitions of terms and writing styles that may potentially become barriers to my intentions. In this study, the label *in trouble* is a broad category and is not limited to any one specific condition. It refers to students whose behavior has jeopardized their success (in some way) at my institution (the nation's largest private Catholic university); these students could be on the verge of academic, financial, or behavioral dismissal. The term can also encompass types of *misbehaving* or discipline issues, i.e., fighting, vandalism, or similar actions. At the same time, the reference in trouble could simply mean that the student was not responsible enough to attend classes regularly or to seek academic assistance/advising during a term and is suffering the consequences. In some cases, the student might be completely responsible for his problems, while in other cases the problem might be completely beyond the student's control. It is also important to keep in mind that this self-study segregates Black male students who display inappropriate behaviors or violate academic or conduct codes from those Black male students who are matriculating and whom I do not perceive as in trouble.

I use the terms *African American* and *Black* interchangeably throughout the study, just as I treat *men students* and *male students*, and I do so for reasons far beyond mere *stylistic* purposes; I forego political or social distinctions that segregate these terms into distinct communities of discourse. Finally, I capitalize African American, Black, and People of Color. I view these as more than *mere words*. These terms, like many others, symbolize the struggles, the intentional genocides, untold atrocities, the smothered voices, and still the mystic survival of peoples who were not supposed to survive; furthermore, these terms (like others) represent an ugly profile of America's personality and history. W. E. B. DuBois (1996) understood this concept; for many years, he waged a public war with the early Twentieth Century's mainstream media, insisting it adopt a common policy to capitalize the word *Negro*. David Levering Lewis (2000) says DuBois regarded

“the use of a small letter for the name of twelve million Americans and two hundred million human beings is a personal insult” (Lewis, pp. 233-234). Despite DuBois’ efforts, as recently as “November 1925, *The New York Times* had once again rejected his [DuBois’] plea to capitalize Negro” (Lewis, pp. 192-193). Within that context, I honor DuBois’ efforts, as well as acknowledge the ongoing struggle and the ongoing survival of these peoples in a simple way: by capitalizing these words — especially the term *Black* — which some linguists and journalists still oppose. I likewise capitalize *White* in reference to race, mainly for its role in these struggles and life-stories of Negroes and Blacks and other oppressed peoples around the world. It is important to note that I capitalize these terms only when referring to people they represent, not when the reference is to colors of objects or *things*.

OVERVIEW

This self-study is a journey within myself, even a *safari*, filled with emotions such as excitement, ambivalence, and even fear. I have an idea of what I want to find, but I’m still not sure of just what I may find (and photograph or document or what I may do with this evidence) along the way, and of course I am afraid of the unknown, especially a fear of seeing myself as something I do not want to be. At the same time, however, this study and the journey it produces are important because I want to know what informs my work and my educational philosophy as an educator; I am particularly concerned about my engagement of African American men students who are in trouble. I am an African American male educator, and for the past twenty-nine years I have both taught classes and performed administrative duties on several university campuses. While I have taught at an historically-Black university, the majority of my career has unfolded on private White campuses. My current position situates me as a primary advocate for Students of Color; as a result, colleagues throughout my institution refer students to me for various forms of assistance. I engage students from all cultures, genders, lifestyles, and backgrounds; some of them are in trouble, and some are not. My engagement of Men of Color who are in trouble is different from my engagement of Women of Color — or any other group — who are in trouble. I want to better understand the source of this discrepancy. Numerous national studies and community initiatives support the notion that Black men in higher education, especially on predominantly White campuses, constitute the most vulnerable population on college campuses. Given my knowledge of these studies and my role to support this group, I need to better understand my practice.

In the 1990s my fraternity launched a national campaign, which was really a reactivation of its almost fifty-year-old campaign for the education of Black Men: “Go to high school. Go to college.” The revised theme of the same concept was “Black men are an endangered species (on college campuses).” Our national office charged local college and alumni chapters with the task of holding educational seminars, establishing mentoring programs, etc., for high school Black men, all in an effort to motivate more Black men to attend college. This “endangered species

(on college campuses)” idea stems from a wealth of legitimate research around the topic, and the current data is no more positive than data from the 1980s. Bill Alexander (2000) cited The American Council on Education’s study of this issue to show that approximately 37% of Black men were enrolled in college, compared to 42% of Black women and 44% of White men. He further emphasized that despite the fact that more Black men are enrolling in college today than twenty years ago, other groups have surpassed this population in both enrollment and graduation rates. To support this notion, Alexander offered some sobering statistics: in 1996, only 35% of the Black men enrolled in NCAA Division I colleges graduated in a six-year period, compared with 59% of White males, 46% of Hispanic males, 41% of Native American males, and 45% of Black women.

The Daily Trojan, The University of Southern California’s paper (2002), further supports this notion of Black men’s vulnerability and scarcity in higher education by offering similar statistics; in fact, the article states that Black men remain in the minority even at historically-Black-colleges-and-universities (HBCUs). The article provided the following data: Jackson State University’s Fall 2002 enrollment of Black men constituted 37.8% of the enrollment, while Black women represented 62.2%. In addition, at Tuskegee University (the school founded by Booker T. Washington and alma mater of Lionel Riche of *The Commodores*), Black men comprised 42% of the 2002 class, while Black women represented 58% and Whites/Other comprised 5% of that group. The enrollment data at my own university, a private, Catholic, Midwestern university, also supports these researchers’ work; Black male enrollment has remained consistently less than all other populations — with the exception of Native Americans — for the past four years, according to data provided by my school’s Office for Institutional Planning and Research. I take the time to cite these studies because I want to make sure readers — as well as this writer — understand the context in which this study unfolds, and I wish to highlight the vulnerability of this population, which in turn presses me to think deeply about the true impact of my work. A bottom line of this study is my desire to know if I am unconsciously hindering rather than helping Black men (in trouble) on my White campus.

As an African American male educator with twenty-nine years of experience, I would like to think that I have made some contributions to the field of educational practices. Even more important, as a transformative educator and critical thinker, I would like to think that I have helped give the world generations of compassionate, competent, and socially responsible citizenry. At the same time, however, as an educator who practices honest reflection, I must also acknowledge that I probably have made some pedagogical or procedural errors in the process of helping shape the minds and futures of these students. I further realize that I am a *socialized* entity, and therefore, I exist as a complex, complicated, and even convoluted entity reflecting the layered and often ironic society that shaped my practices and me. I want to know what elements of my early experiences, as well as what aspects of our prejudiced society, I may have retained. In other words, I want to know how these elements may inform my work with students, how they may even bias my

view of African American men who are in trouble, and how they inform my own identity.

Given my philosophical and ideological beliefs that schooling at all levels should help build a new social order, to borrow George Counts' (1932) words from an article of the same title, honest reflection upon the *why* (not just what and how) is crucial; this level of reflection also helps me better understand ways in which I might unintentionally oppress the very spirits I *say* my work liberates. This type of outcome can easily happen when the *why* remains buried and the practice becomes a commonsense ahistorical act ("This is the way we've always done it" or "This is just the way it is" approach). Apple (1990) explores this notion as an ideological approach to education. Without reflection and without research around one's practices, one fails to understand that the source of those practices just might be an internalized prejudice. This practice thereby helps reproduce traditional hegemony and oppressions at the hands of well-meaning people in positions of authority.

If I, and others who offer ourselves up as educators and facilitators of social justice, do not engage in ongoing, deep reflection around the *why* of our practices, then we become hypocrites and frauds in whose hands rest the future of democracy. Our messages — devoid of deep reflection around the *why* of our practices — become, to paraphrase Shakespeare, "a [collective] tale told by an [a collection of] idiot[s], full of sound and fury [yet] signifying nothing."

THE CATALYSTS

Two significant events pressed me to undertake this study. The first catalyst for this self-study was my encounter — or my reflection upon my encounter — with an African American male student who was about to be dismissed from school due to a lack of academic progress. For the sake of this study, I will use the pseudonym of James. Approximately three years prior to our meeting, James had transferred from another school where he was a celebrated athlete. For the last year-and-a-half at the previous school, he sustained an injury and could not play, which contributed to his off-and-on depression. Based on his total number of years in school, James should have been a graduating senior; however, based on his total number of academic credits, he was still classified as a second-quarter third-year student with less than a 2.0 out of 4.0 grade point average. To further complicate matters, James, with an enormous school debt, had exhausted his financial-aid moneys and his family was unable to provide any financial support. A small nucleus of advocates on campus from the Financial Aid office and from Academic Affairs referred James to me for additional support. James was not accustomed to asking for help and did not want to accept any. He had developed his own plan for school and for work, which was unrealistic given his circumstances, and he was not interested in advice that did not match with his personal desires and decisions. In addition to all of this, James was an extremely bright, articulate young man.

In my first conversation with James, I was brutally frank, pointing out his responsibilities for his current condition while also emphasizing the institutions' roles. On the surface, I showed little compassion, constantly emphasizing that only

he could move himself beyond his current problems. Even more important, however, my tone was stern, direct, and sermonizing. I sounded very much like the traditional Black Baptist preacher, calling this sinner to repentance, preaching him away from the idolatries of “hanging out and drinking” with his buddies, and guiding him toward the light of self-discipline, studying, and obeying all rules. I allowed him to talk, but during my lecture, I did not solicit his input, explanation, or reasons for going astray; besides, I had already read James’ files and two people had given me verbal reports on him. Nancy Lesko (1996) places my delivery (or some form thereof) in a scholarly context, calling it a coming-of-age experience for young people. Lesko suggests that some educators use a homiletic dialogue to help youth transition from childhood to adulthood. She explains that these educators and mentors draw (consciously and unconsciously) from church traditions and values in performing their duties. Other scholars suggest that this philosophy places more importance and authority on the author of the homily. In other words, I was more concerned with my values and principles than with the needs of James at that moment. In my interpretation, this philosophy further suggests that the preacher-educator’s position is more important, for not only is he *innocent* but he also is burdened now with the responsibility of *saving* the student-sinner. That certainly is how I felt in my engagement with James. Please note that my aim with this citation is not an attempt to justify my engagement with James; it is an authentic attempt to understand and to explain it.

I wanted James to feel guilty (much like a preacher wants a parishioner to feel at certain times) and partially responsible for his situation, especially the consistently poor grades. But why did I want this, and why did I consistently take this approach with students like James? I also wanted him to understand that as a twenty-four-year-old Black man he had to become serious about school, work, and life in general. My value system informed me that education is the key for Blacks’ and poor people’s matriculation into middle-class strata. I wanted him to stop blaming everyone else for all of his problems. Above all, I wanted him to realize that he did not have all the answers, that he must accept input from key others, even when he did not want to do so. James did not mask his anger with me, nor did he sit politely and listen to my sermon; however, more so than the conversation itself with me, James’ post-meeting action provided a catalyst for this self-study.

After leaving my office, James sent me a voice-mail, colorfully explaining that I made him feel like a failure, a “slacker.” Strategically infusing sentences with terms such as, “fuck,” “fucking” (creatively used as verbs, adjectives, and nouns) and “God damned” (clearly stressing the right syllables of these words to attain a maximum impact), James said that no one had ever talked to him like that before. He added that I never would speak to him again in such dehumanizing words or tones again. His aunt later phoned me to finish the work her nephew had begun. This report of James’ response to my first conversation with him is an abbreviated account. It represents other accounts with other Black men students who were in trouble and their responses to my initial and stern lectures.

I allowed appropriate time for both James and me to reflect upon our engagements with each other. After an appropriate period of time, I e-mailed him,

requesting a face-to-face meeting. He returned to my office and volunteered an apology for his colorful e-mail. He also explained in great detail that my words both insulted and confused him, which made him angry by challenging him. Yet, my words/actions did not match his expectations of a mentor (and I did present myself as a mentor for him). As a star athlete at his former school, he attracted the attention of several wealthy alumni who presented themselves to him as mentors interested in helping him succeed. According to James, these were White men who only gave him money and never offered constructive criticism, never challenged or even questioned his attitude about school or career, and certainly never spoke to him the way I did. He never took them seriously; he just took the money, assuming they did not care about him enough to even question, let alone challenge his thoughts.

After James' injury prevented him from playing basketball, these men disappeared from his life. This was his only experience with mentors. In essence, I listened (and I understood). I accepted his apology, and in a less abrasive yet direct manner, I also explained my understanding. I included that his e-mail to me was unprofessional and material for sanctioning, according to the *Student Handbook*. I proceeded with the agreement to work with him, and I agreed to listen to some of his ideas, as long as he listened to mine. I also clearly explained that should he ever write or speak to me in such language — for I never used any such language with him— I would share the voice-mail with both Campus Safety and the Dean of Students. Our partnership only lasted a few weeks. James was not able to accept the ideas I offered, from why it was important for him to meet with teachers to why it was important for him to work on campus and improve his grades rather than to spend time looking for a part-time job off campus. I had convinced a Financial-Aid counselor to find James all the money needed to complete his schooling. He and I collaborated to develop a plan for James to have financial support, as long as he improved his grades - but he continually wanted to make changes that did not reflect his articulated desire to succeed academically. James was not the first student to respond to me in that way. I sensed a trend and a need to understand that trend. It could have been easy for me to assume that the men students who articulated their thoughts in *that way* were the ones with the problem, not me. That approach to the problem was too easy, and it did not provide me with any deeper understanding of myself or my practices.

The second and perhaps more important catalyst for my study was my introduction to ethnographic research, autoethnography, and the crucial role of self-study in these genres. I say this is “perhaps more important” because autoethnography helped me understand how to use my experience with James as an opportunity to better understand my practices and, ultimately, how to become a better educator. I have been reflective in my work as an educator, but reflective *how* rather than *why*. In other words, I concentrated on technique and methodology, not on the sources of those methods; this was especially true during my time as a classroom teacher. I did not think deeply about my perceptions and expectations (or my lack of expectations) for certain students in my classes. I knew that I viewed Black students differently from White students and women students

differently from men students — even within the same racial or cultural group. I did not, however, consciously fold these differences into the process of my becoming a better educator. As a result, I do not think my previous reflection included the subconscious influences and sources of my work; it is these influences that construct the *why* and the *why not*.

Upon reading the work of several ethnographers, however, I soon realized the limitations, even the superficiality, of my reflections up to that point. I was positively overwhelmed by William Tierney's (1994) "On Method and Hope," Richard V. Travisano's (2002) "On Becoming Italian American," and Carolyn Ellis's (1995) "Emotional and Ethical Quagmires in Returning to the Field." These writings represented quests for the *whys* and I immediately understood the type of journey I must undertake. The depth of these scholars' reflections not only resonated with me, but also spoke to the depth of self-exploration that must occur. Ellis's (1995) "Quagmires" chapter drew a deep empathy from spaces I cannot explain; reading this essay was like watching my favorite movie and identifying with the characters' problems. I felt Ellis's struggle to reconcile her role as scholar with her role as friend to a community that did not understand her notions of scholarship. Most of all, Ellis taught me the importance of being painfully honest in the process of reflecting. Travisano's (2002) essay captured my bittersweet memories of how education transitioned me from a simple rural life to a hectic urban atmosphere with completely different values. His description of how his education separated him from family and the culture of his childhood reflected my own journey.

THEORETICAL INFLUENCES

While this study is primarily guided by (my) recall and gut-heart theory, it is also buttressed by more traditional theoretical structures. Ellis's (2000) notion that the subject must write toward vulnerability is a primary influence. Ellis argues that an ethnographer cannot pick and choose elements of his or her story based on personal emotions such as embarrassment, shame, or painful memories. The writer must tell the entire story, complete with such emotic realities. In doing so, one writes himself or herself into *vulnerability*, i.e., the writer becomes vulnerable to the readers. I regard Ellis's words to mean that an ethnographer or the author of a self-study has a responsibility to write the self vulnerable, and to not do so would violate an ethical code of ethnography. Within this context, I write experiences that I have not shared with anyone else, events that I find embarrassing as an adult male reflecting upon his childhood experiences. These reflections, however, make the process authentic and in turn also help locate the richest mines for excavation. Yet, I think twice about sharing some of the memories, for just thinking about them is emotional, and editing this material requires rereading and rethinking that churns a whirlpool of emotions. Despite all this, I know what I must do.

Weis and Fine's (2000) *Speed Bumps* bears upon my study. They centralize Fine's working-the-hyphen philosophy as being an important part of any authentic interview. In a schizophrenically rational context, I divide myself into two parties,

the interviewer and the subject, asking myself pointed and personal questions, then answering those questions, attempting to gain meaning between the past and the present in the contexts of both questions and answers. Editing this chapter helped me realize that perhaps I self-split into three personas during this study: interviewer, subject, and moderator or interpreter. In the midst of this self-splitting, I attempt to establish a mutual respect or a level playing field among these entities, not favoring or positioning any one as the expert. This method theoretically establishes all parties as experts and allows each one to contribute its own expertise to the process.

Weis, in Weis and Fine (2000), credits Fine for developing this philosophy into an extended methodology or practice that allows equity in an interviewing process. This process highlights the hyphens and the spaces they contain. In this context, the hyphens become sliding tracks, transporting all parties in and out of the different identities that sit around the table, allowing all parties to move freely into the labels that rest at the end of each hyphen; in other words, the identities and roles of each party constantly shift throughout the interview. Weis argues that the success of interviewing lies not so much in respecting the identities at the end of each hyphen but in respecting the spaces created by the hyphens.

During the course of this study, I attempt to visit, even linger in, each space, to ride each hyphen, absorbing important data unique to each space and then using that data to influence my roles in each space. Quite frankly, attempting such a process created not only confusion but also frustration as I attempted to name an identity at a given moment, let alone to analyze data through a specific-identity lens. I finally concluded that such structure is both unnecessary and unnecessarily complicated; identity is never a singular concept. Regardless of whether I am interviewer, subject, analyst or all three, the process (the journey) will be significantly informed by all.

I also thought seriously throughout this study about issues of ethics, especially as raised by Wolcott (2002) in his reflective piece *Sneaky Kid*. Within the confines of the process, I have an ethical responsibility to the writing, i.e., to be painfully honest (or to write myself vulnerable). I also have an ethical responsibility to the people I name in this study, as well as to their memories (most are now deceased) and their legacies as educators. This sense of responsibility presses me to treat each school and the people who populate each space with dignity and accuracy (as best I can recall). I especially retain an ethical responsibility to my students, especially the Jameses with whom I interact.

I quickly acknowledge that none of my interactions with students resembled Wolcott's (2002) engagements-of-intimacy with and exploitation of Brad. At the same time, however, I also reflect seriously upon my ethical (and institutional) responsibility to Black men students who are in trouble, asking myself if I have violated some ethical responsibility that brings them (the students) to me. This context highlights Wolcott's (2002) central point in *Sneaky Kid*: Is it ever possible to teach, to engage, or even to interact in a supportive mode without violating some ethical point? Was it possible for me to attempt to meet James's needs without simultaneously violating at least one ethical responsibility? After all, prior to my

meeting with him I had access to all of his confidential files: academic records, financial, income and debt folders, personal history (narrative and script), family structure and dynamics over a significant time period. In addition, I discussed these files, along with opinions of James, with other administrators. These actions, along with my harsh discourse, surely violated somebody's ethics - his, mine, institutional or educational. Furthermore, all of these actions unfolded within a greater context of my role as James's primary institutional advocate. Wolcott (2002) seems to have resolved his dilemma of ethics by concluding there is no way to avoid abusing the concept. I think his is an overly simplistic resolution. At the same time, however, I remain intrigued by the possibilities of truth in his conclusion and the questions those possibilities generate for my own study: Is it possible for me or any other educator, regardless of one's title, to effectively serve students, and perhaps each other, without crossing some socially constructed line or exiting some safe (and theoretical) space called "ethics"? Is ethics only violated when one knowingly and intentionally steps across a line? What happens if the teacher lacks the ability to see the line, and how do concepts of race, class, and culture cloud one's sight of this ethical line? What was my primary ethical responsibility to James? I do not know if there are answers, per se, to these questions; perhaps the value lies in the process of discussion, rather than in the possession of answers.

Much is written today on the notion of caring, particularly in how teachers care or do not care for their students. Diana Rauner's (2000) philosophy of caring, as discussed in *They Still Pick Me Up When I Fall*, influenced this self-study. Having the opportunity to interview Ms. Rauner, in addition to reading her work, helped me to think about caring for students in a general context. More specifically, however, it pressed me to explore caring within a cultured and a gendered context. How do I as a Black male educator care for Black students, especially Black men students who are in trouble? Perhaps a better question is, Did I really care for James, and all the other Jameses who have sat before my desk? And if I did care for James, then how do I reconcile my harsh discourse with caring? My conscious justification of the initial engagement is one of cultural caring. I have connected cultural caring to my childhood experiences as shaped by my Black culture (or am I using this culture thing as a scapegoat for my own inappropriateness, including not unpacking internalized prejudices?). I tell myself that Black people—and perhaps People of Color, more so than Whites — often use amplified volumes, passionate tones, and various forms of *tough love* to express care, and I argue that this cultured delivery is often misinterpreted by other groups. Cultural caring, as a theory also uses the notion that Blacks who are in trouble must be verbally slapped, if not assaulted, quickly and severely immediately following the act in order to get their attention. The rationale: We must toughen them and make them aware quickly of their vulnerability as Blacks, for White America will not allow them to make the same mistakes it will allow young Whites, especially White men. Unless they understand and understand quickly, they are shaping their own demise.

At the same time, however, I must explore the source of what I call "cultural caring." Is this cultural aspect really authentic, or has society socialized Blacks to

replicate White America's historical expressions of caring-for-Blacks, dispensed in specific epochs (chattel slavery, Ante-bellum, Jim Crowe, or contemporary colluded metamorphosis of all the above)? Furthermore, am I unconsciously draping this racist practice with the convenient cloak of cultural caring? I want to know. Rauner's (2000) title, *They Still Pick Me Up When I Fall*, is significant, for it implies that in caring we allow others — especially young people — to fall, to make mistakes, to get in trouble, but we always pick them up and allow them to begin again. I continue to question myself about James: Did I ever really pick him up? Did I allow him to fall? Did I sincerely want to pick him up? Did I bully him, figuratively rolling his face in mud or standing on his neck while he was down?

I also superimpose a gut-heart theoretical framework upon this study. In effect, I lean into and trust my own ways-of-knowing as an adult African American man who has experienced racism, classism, and similar prejudices via both institutionalized and personalized contexts. I remain convinced that all people are either born with or they develop via their experiences culturalized ways-of-knowing and a sensibility to detect issues in ways that reside outside traditional scientific reasonings. However, social constructs such as “progress” and “civilization” herd us away from such inclinations, labeling them as “primitive.” The irony is that some of our most vulnerable populations strip themselves of such cultural gifts, thereby rendering themselves vulnerable to contemporary prejudices. I argue that all qualitative researchers should lean into their gut-heart inclinations, rather than run from them. This is especially true when the research involves excavations within the researchers' own cultures. In this study, I spend extra time on those memories in which my gut or my heart detects more than concrete, insignificant elements of a conscious memory. I press myself to meticulously unpack the memories as I sift each one, as miners sift for gold nuggets in a running stream. In many ways, the heart component suggests those spaces are filled with good intentions, notions of caring, and even love, but I now realize that the experience was not so positive. These areas merit scrutinizing because they nearly always harbor hidden curricula, unconscious prejudices, and even internalized oppressions, thereby contributing to the reproduction of traditional hegemony and status quo social stratifications.

METHODOLOGY

First, it is understood that a self-study is a trip into the past in order to better understand the present and to improve the future, while keeping *self* as the focus of the entire process. As a method(ology) of unfolding this process, I relive my early experiences as a Black male student in trouble. I pay close attention to my Black male teachers' discourse and engagement of me during those times I was in trouble (assuming there is a connection between that experienced discourse and my discourse with Black male students who are in trouble), and I examine some of the questions contained in this potential connection. Am I conveying my messages or those of someone else? In what ways am I unconsciously fulfilling the legacy, mission or purpose(s) of the past? Is my paradigm — regardless of its former or

present intentions — antiquated? Most of all: Is the paradigm really mine? I travel back in time, back to my early days of schooling in a segregated, rural Alabama Black community. Once again, I sit in the classrooms of my all-Black school. I reworship from the benches of my all-Black, rural church — with its strict but unspoken gender and age codes for seating. And I once again ride the big yellow school bus. I do this all in order to identify and name the sources of ideology, my very attitude toward Black men students who are in trouble and get in trouble. Again, I want to know why I engage a vulnerable population in what appears to be an almost combative style.

In sharing my exposure to ethnography and self-study, I would be irresponsible without acknowledging two of my professors whose support was invaluable. Professor Peter Pereira helped me understand the techniques and intricate workings of self-study, and Dr. Amira Proweller introduced me to Carolyn Ellis, William Tierney, Laurel Richardson, and other powerful ethnographers. In the context of these introductions, Dr. Proweller also helped me understand that ethnography and self-study must contribute to a larger effort of improving both the self and the society (community) to which the self is connected.

As a context and even as parameters of this journey, I extrapolate the traditional notions of schooling, learning, teaching, and the classroom to transform my entire childhood community into one big diverse school. Furthermore, all people who impart instructions on behavior are teachers, and every lesson learned on behavior is a tool that helps shape student persistence and student success. In this context, the exchange of ideas among all parties is more than just shifting around of information. This exchange constitutes the construction and the dissemination of knowledge, which, in turn, (re)shapes values and insights, and produces culturized ways-of-knowing, all of which is vital to a healthy, stable community. Success is often the demonstration of appropriate behavior in specific spaces at specific times. In my context, the teachers helped me understand behaviors appropriate to key spaces at specific times.

My extrapolation of learning is supported in the educational philosophy and scholarship behind The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators' (2004) *Learning Reconsidered* monograph. The authors argue that the traditional delineation of “terms such as personal development, student development, and learning is meaningless, if not destructive” (p.3). This same argument rejects the notion that the traditional classroom is the only campus space where important and meaningful learning occurs. In fact, this philosophy transforms the entire college campus into one vibrant, interconnected classroom (much like I transformed my entire community), with different units contributing different elements of learning. In this context, learning emphasizes more than mere academic skills; while academic rigor is important, learning and academics unfold within a context of democratic values, social responsibility, and civic engagement. Among other scholars, Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) support this rethinking of traditional educational teaching and learning. Like the authors of *Learning Reconsidered*, Henderson and Hawthorne encourage a transformative education movement; they further assert, “Too many children [students at all levels of the educational

experience] are schooled, not educated” (p.1). I build on this transformative notion to further argue that any space in which learning occurs is a classroom; it is within this philosophy that my church, school and school bus experiences find their groundings and where my Black men teachers find their credentials. The classroom of the twenty-first century will become more of *an experience* and less of a *site*.

This notion that all campus spaces contribute to student learning in some meaningful way also reflects the scholarship of Peter McLaren (1999). He argues that students carve out different spaces that meet different needs within a schooling context. Although different and not sanctioned as valuable by traditional schooling theorists, McLaren insists all spaces in a schooling environment contribute to students’ overall (not just academic) success. He refers to those off-line spaces where students learn the codes and behaviors for survival as liminal spaces (the cafeteria, playground, restrooms and even locker rooms). Lessons learned in these spaces are as important to overall student success as lessons learned in the traditional classroom from a traditional classroom teacher. My discussion of students’ spaces and their contribution to learning is also slightly different from that of McLaren in this context. Whereas the students are the focus of McLaren’s study, I am really the center of this self-study. The students I engage — as well as the spaces in which I engage them — are secondary. I mine each space for my experience as a Black male student who was in trouble, along with its contribution to contemporary engagement of this population, my current pedagogical engagement of this population, and the often volatile discourse that fuels this engagement. I reflect upon my Black male teachers’ initial (as best I can recall) responses to my acting out in each space. I analyze the tone, content, body language, facial expressions, general mannerisms, gestures, language. I am looking for connections, however subtle, between the past and the present.

For the sake of this chapter, I chose only three of these spaces-of-schooling and the Black male teacher I can recall — in each space — responding to my being in trouble. Each teacher is a pseudonym. I present each man as a teacher, and I regard the space in which he engages me as his classroom (although some spaces imply team and even group teaching). I argue that a primary goal of schooling in America remains to (re)shape behaviors. I call these three spaces of schooling the traditional school, the bus school, and the church school. While reading, please recall that the context for these three spaces is one conceptual classroom, complete with teachers, pedagogy, learning goals, and assessment tools. In addition, the lessons of socialization that unfold in all three are both different and similar and central to my overall success as a student. As a result, this chapter treats education as a non-traditional, holistic, life-long and circular experience, and all that separates the spatial factors of schooling are socialized and imaginary borders that do not exist in reality.

TRADITIONAL SCHOOL

As a child I insisted on both being heard and being seen. I possessed a natural curiosity that pushed me to question and even challenge much of my world. In effect, I was a gregarious, loud, and often belligerent kid in all my childhood spaces, especially in (traditional) school. This space provided me with peers, with company, others with whom I could talk, laugh, and just become part of a larger group, none of which I experienced at home as an only child. In this context, I craved school and the social engagement it provided me. However, this engagement, the mores associated with it, and my immature personality often collided. One example that remains with me — and I assume it to be an initial disciplinary engagement — is with my seventh-grade teacher, Mr. Wilson. Having tired of asking me to stop talking and to pay attention, Mr. Wilson finally yelled to me — in the middle of class — “Spraggins, shut up or I will slap the taste out of your mouth!” He then ordered me to stand in a corner, facing the wall for the duration of the class period. I’m still unsure of how or why he singled only me from the other person(s) with whom I was talking.

This experience was traumatic for me. Although I was boisterous, I was not tough, and even slight displays of anger — from either adults or peers — frightened me. I would cry easily, even well into high school. I stood there, humiliated before my peers and even more humiliated because I was either on the verge of or actually crying. A Black male seventh grader, crying for being yelled at in a circle of his Black peers did not — and still does not — unfold without its share of peer ridicule. After class, Mr. Wilson talked with me briefly, telling me to never behave like that again in his class; his words were biting, and his tone intimidating, scary, and even threatening. He clearly explained that I was responsible for my behavior earlier that day and I was likewise responsible for changing it. In other words, my being in trouble was my fault and was my responsibility to correct. He even yelled at me for crying, implying that I was too old to act out in class much less to cry about being disciplined. In his final phase of scolding me, whether or not he spoke the words themselves, this teacher conveyed to me, “Just be a man!”

During that time, my school, my community, and my home interacted on personal levels to achieve an intimate and influential network of support, especially regarding students’ acting out in class. I attended a racially segregated school that housed grades one through twelve. Although school was twenty-five or more miles from my house, the teachers traveled throughout our rural county, visiting homes of their pupils, sitting and socializing with the families. This was a very poor community; at least the section where the Blacks lived was poor, living very much below the official poverty line at that time. Many of the homes did not have running water, and mine was one of them. We did not even have a well (at that time), so we made two daily treks to a neighbor’s well to retrieve drinking water. After forty years, I still recall crossing a gravel road with my jugs of water en route home from the well and spying the car of two of my other teachers, Mrs. Hinton and Mrs. Wright. I knew the car from the many visits they made throughout the community. I quickly dashed into a grove of tall shrubs and young trees,

embarrassed for my teachers to see me lugging drinking water. In retrospect, I view my act as a waste of energy, for surely they already knew more about me and my family, especially our economic conditions, than I ever realized.

Mr. Wilson visited our community even more regularly than did Mrs. Hinton and Mrs. Wright. He knew just about all of the Blacks in that area; he taught my mother in high school, and he attended my grandmother's funeral. This type of communal caring allowed him to talk to me and other students in that manner. Mr. Wilson's disciplinary engagement of me was typical of all the Black male teachers to most Black male students — and to some Black female students — during that time in my extended community and within my extrapolated version of school. Whatever the source or rationale, this harsh, confrontational engagement seemed to represent African American's (southern, rural, poor) concept of cultural caring.

BUS SCHOOL

I rode a big yellow school bus approximately twenty-five miles one-way twice per day, five days per week. Crowded with children of all ages, personalities, sizes, and grades, this venue provided excellent opportunities for socializing. The bus ride also provided opportunities for learning valuable lessons that might be disguised as play. At the hands of peers I learned social manners, such as when and when not to use inappropriate comments and language, and how to acquire membership to peer groups. Paulo Freire (1970) expounds upon this concept in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by arguing that every teacher is really a *teacher-student* and every student is really a *student-teacher*. At the time, I was just having a blast with friends. In reflection, however, I now realize that I understood very little about this classroom, the opportunities for formal and informal learning, the dangers involved — and created by us as students — or the stress it generated for our teacher (the bus driver).

This rolling classroom often contained fifty (or more) students, but it held only one official teacher: my Uncle Willie, the bus driver. His job was difficult and dangerous, given that he was forced to multi-task every mile of the fifty-mile trip. Uncle Willie tried to teach us appropriate individual, as well as acceptable group, behavior in public spaces. He functioned as disciplinarian, dispensing punishment for students who would act out or misbehave in other ways; he served as a liaison to parents, reporting their children's behaviors to them. He fulfilled all these roles on the spot, while actually driving the bus, carefully negotiating fifty miles of winding, narrow, two-lane, heavily trafficked roads. As students, we did not make his job easy. This was a chaotic classroom, often filled with inter-student conflict: arguments, fights, and unnecessarily loud conversation. The dynamics sometimes forced him to stop the bus and confront individual students. As an adult, I now realize my contributions to making his job difficult, just as I also understand and acknowledge my helping complicate the roles of my other teachers in other settings.

I never remember anyone else driving my school bus, so for at least twelve years, I spent five days per week with my Uncle Willie. I thought that I hated him,

and he, so I thought, hated me. He thought I was too loud and too spoiled, while I thought he was just a mean man. He constantly yelled for me to lower my voice, threatening to tell my grandmother, and to even suspend me from riding the bus. My most painful memories of bus school, however, revolve around two of my uncle's efforts to educate me: his singling me out before the other children and his choice of language during the process. Tired of telling me to stop talking so loudly on a trip home from school, Uncle Willie forced me to leave my seat — nearly the last seat on the bus — and come to the very front with him. He made me sit on the steps by myself, facing the doors, while he lectured me for the duration of the trip. His forceful, humiliating, and assaulting words and his penetrating, intimidating tones tore through my already fragile psyche. His voice was filled with anger, urgency, and other emotions I could not identify. There were times I actually thought he would stop the bus and physically attack me. I can still hear him biting through my name as he lectured, "Timmy!" I guess that was the day he developed his favorite line for me, as I still hear it, or perhaps I should say, I still feel it: "Timmy, boy, you is rotten as dirt!" Although I am forty-seven years old and a seasoned educator, I vividly recall Uncle Willie's bus-school lectures to me. All the students were looking, although many were engaged in their own conversations. Nonetheless, this was a public venue, and there I sat in Public Square, as a public example of what can happen to community members who do not obey the rules.

So much of the bus-school experience — all centering around Uncle Willie — clawed my conscious psyche, helping shape and reshape my sense of identity. Perhaps this was Uncle Willie's objective, as reshaping behavior is often a goal of all types of teaching and learning. Although these experiences unfolded some forty years ago, I long ago forbade anyone to call me "Timmy." I now enforce the rule more than ever. Each time I hear that word, I hear Uncle Willie's words, "Boy, you're as rotten as dirt!" During a later phase of my life, I even asked people to stop calling me "Tim" and begin calling me by my formal name, "Timothy." I am certain that Uncle Willie's teachings influenced — however slightly — my evolving sense of identity. I do not think I was or am *rotten*, which means spoiled child. In addition, I always thought he hated me — based on his language and actions with me — because the negative was never balanced or tempered with positive comments or actions (at least not that I can recall). This is the one uncle that I as an adult have never desired to visit, have never wondered about his health, and have never even wanted to meet on the street. In fact, my mother and at least one other person have told me that he has asked about me, and both times I expressed genuine surprise at this, still thinking that he hated me and that I still hate him.

This self-study has helped me rethink my interactions with Uncle Willie. It has allowed me to somewhat depersonalize his words and to place them in a larger context, the same context in which I place other teachers' engagement of me. For whatever reason, I exempted him from the possibilities-of-caring that I heaped upon the others. I am now deconstructing his words, actions, reasons, environment, and my role in and connection to all of that. While I still do not have

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all the answers, I have identified new possibilities and, likewise, the beginnings of new understandings. Most of all, I don't think I hate Uncle Willie any more. Perhaps he, like the teachers I describe, was trying to prepare me to function in the world as he understood it to be. Perhaps he wanted me to toughen up, to grow up, and perhaps he used the only pedagogy, curriculum, and teaching tools he knew. After all, that's the same thing I did with James. In reflecting on Uncle Willie's impact upon me I think I now see my discussion with James, and with all the other Jameses I have taught, in a different way.

CHURCH SCHOOL

Mr. Jones served as my teacher in the church-school setting. Class unfolded during my junior-high years (or thereabout), as I attended my church's annual revival. My community church was highly gendered; there were clear distinctions between the roles of men and women. Furthermore, I needed to learn and respect those boundaries. In the church, men and women sat on opposite sides of the church; these sections were further divided by the ages of the men and women. The older women sat in the very front on the left side of the pulpit, and the older men sat in the very front of the right side of the pulpit. The young adults, children, and visitors filled the pews in the middle of the sanctuary. Everyone knew this, so there was no need to write it down or to share it during a new members' orientation. Similar levels of segregation filled the choir stands. Regardless of what part an individual sang, men always sat on the back row.

Our country church eagerly anticipated summer revivals, usually held during August. For most rural southern churches — especially the Black churches — revival served multiple purposes. It was a membership recruitment tool. It provided a medium of social engagement, bringing different church congregations together five nights per week to worship, socialize, and affirm community. And it renewed religious, spiritual belief that God “would make a way” for and heal these Black people who suffered from social diseases such as racism and economic marginalization. For these and other reasons, annual revival was more sacred than regular Sunday worship service. Our small church would host regionally known guest preachers and their congregations for the week-long rededication. These preachers would whip the congregation into an emotional frenzy, infusing the church with a contagious electricity, delivered through the call-and-response technique. Deacons would bellow, “Preach the word!” and church sisters would leap to their feet, screaming testimonies of God's blessings and strutting holy jigs up and down the aisles. Ms. Fannie Mae was infamous for her church theatrics, often hurling her pocketbook clear across the church. Momma used to say that Ms. Fannie Mae didn't have anything — meaning no money — in her purse; otherwise, she wouldn't throw it.

Regarded as sacred acts and as evidence that the person *knows* God, these rituals also symbolized membership in and ownership of a collective and common or shared value system. These gestures reflected community and were not to be trivialized. I did not understand this at the time, of course, so I did not regard

annual revival as such a sacred ritual; I was a child, still being schooled and yet “uncommunitized.” During one of these services, I sat with a couple of friends, conducting our own service, a satire of the larger, official service. We whispered, pointed, and giggled, creating a service-within-a-service effect and laughing at what appeared to us as a comedy show, staged by seasoned comedians. The scene was chaotically funny, as viewed through the eyes of young children. Communal discourse flowed, swelled, and crested together; mad chants rose in strange languages by familiar faces; people raced the aisles, as some danced in place. We laughed out loud at the deacons’ resounding “Go ‘head” and “Amen!” and we mimicked the church sisters’ turning purses into flying projectiles, then covered our heads for protection, as if we were indeed “. . . on the battlefield [for my Lord!].” Needless to say, we drew attention to ourselves.

As we filed out of church after services, Mr. Jones called me to him, pointed his finger in my face, and sternly lectured, “Boy, you need to learn how to act in church. I am going to tell Mrs. Sis [my grandmother] she needs to teach you some manners!” He went on and on, never talking to the other boys (at least not that I can recall); he singled me out as a Black male student who was in trouble. Other people continued to file past us, walking to their cars, socializing, and some even listening to the lecture; the entire congregation became a potential audience for my lesson. While I was talkative, I was also respectable, so I usually did not talk back to adults (except for my grandmother), so I listened to Mr. Jones. This lesson was very similar to the two described earlier: the teacher was a Black male; he used strong, biting, even intimidating discourse; he delivered the lesson in a very public space and in full view of an audience; and again, I felt humiliated, regardless of my guilt or innocence.

COMMON THEMES

A number of common themes emerge from these three different school settings, but I focus on three that resonate most personally with me. One theme is the effective teaching-and-learning that occurs in each of these spaces. Mr. Wilson, Uncle Willie, and Mr. Jones were teachers, and to each I was a pupil (whose role was to learn). It matters not that Mr. Williams was the only one of these three teachers with formal teaching credentials who taught in a traditional classroom. These other men possessed different sets of credentials which were as valid as those of Mr. Williams and that afforded them the title of educators in the larger context of school. I learned — although perhaps not from any single lesson — the meaning of success (via behaviors) in all three settings, and learning in any of the three applies to the other two. A traditional educational philosophy may privilege my experiences in the traditional school over those in bus and church schools. However, success or learning in all three is necessary to attain a holistic, healthy developmental process for a student, regardless of his or her age. I hope that at some point I connected the learning between these spaces and figured out an important clue: much of what works in one works in the other two; likewise, much of what does not work in one does not work in the other two.

A second and very important common theme is that each teacher engaged in biting discourse with me. *Biting* really is an understatement. The discourse and language in each school was authoritarian, stern, threatening, talking down to, and unapologetic. Discourse — at least in this context — entails more than just words. I treat the term as a system of connected and intentionally chosen elements of communication, designed to achieve a specific impact (upon both receiver and sender). This system entails facial expressions, tonalities, vocal pitch, as well as the strategic placement of accents and accentuations. And still discourse here includes a host of nonverbals that support the verbals — including hand gestures, finger-pointing, facial expressions, positioning-of-the-head and neck and even how and where one positions the body. In this context, I refer to this mode of communication as *extreme discourse*. Some of these animations are very common within certain cultures, such as Latino and Black. Such discourse accoutrements can heighten the emotions and intensity, not to mention the impact, of a verbal dialogue or monologue. Throughout his lecture, Mr. Wilson even eyeballed, while squinting his eyes and pointing his finger. While Uncle Willie was simultaneously driving and talking to me, he cast his head from me to the road, from the road to me. Initially, as I stood next to him while he drove, I saw the scowl upon his face. As I sat on the steps, I turned my back to him. These men made no attempt to conceal their rage; they channeled it into their discourse.

During each of these exchanges, I wanted to yell back at them, and I wanted to tell them that they could not talk to me that way. I wanted to say, “Who in the hell do you think you are, yelling at me, pointing your finger at me, and telling me what I need to do!” I wanted to disrupt each teacher’s discourse, saying, “Excuse me, but you cannot talk to me like that, so just get the hell out of my face!” Does this desired response sound familiar? Of course, I did nothing like that. I now realize that each confrontation reduced me to the role of James. Despite my humiliation and anger in each setting, I neither confronted my teachers directly nor left an angry message after the fact.

A third and perhaps the most important theme is really an accumulation of all three: A Black male teacher used extreme discourse to teach a Black male student who was in trouble (me). In each scene a Black man is yelling at me, pointing his finger, intimidating me, telling me how I have screwed up and if I don’t change I will screw up my entire life. Furthermore, in each scenario the student is insulted, even humiliated. Sound familiar? These are only two of many similar incidents that unfolded regularly, sometimes with me as subject, sometimes with my peers as subjects, but the delivery was usually the same. During my childhood (for whatever reason), nearly all the Black fathers I knew (I use the term “father” both figuratively and literally) relied upon some form of the extreme discourse when teaching Black sons (I use the term both figuratively and literally), whether or not the sons were in trouble. There was no “let’s discuss this in a quiet manner” approach, or “Take time to reflect upon your actions, and then let’s discuss where you think you went wrong” pedagogy or curriculum in such lessons.

While I can offer mostly conjecture, informed by practical experience, as reasons why, this extreme discourse practice is shaped by one’s culture and class

standings. In addition, I link it to notions of cultural caring. At the root of both concepts (extreme discourse and cultural caring) are ideologies that Black men (in ways that differentiate them from Black women) must be tough in order to survive; Black men must become tough quickly, for Whites do not grant Blacks a second chance; and if you're not tough, you're not really a *man* (macho and machismo roles in communities of color). Embedded within these lessons is an urgency, a belief that the student must learn immediately; otherwise, the larger and White society is going to crush him. The extreme discourse conveys the urgency, the expediency of the lesson.

INSIGHTS

This form of cultural caring and the extreme discourse it breeds rests upon the premise that America is fundamentally racist; furthermore, within that premise there churns a particular hatred for Black men. I embrace parts of this notion, for no sane person can deny the existence of American racism toward Negroes. At the same time, however, my search for the source or the why of my perspectives presses me to examine this idea more critically. In rural Alabama (at least in my community), even when I was not in trouble I was still schooled by Black men teachers. As a child, I walked gravel roads of my rural community, visiting and playing from house to house throughout the day when I wasn't in traditional school. Circles of men would sit beneath shade trees, gather at the local barber shop, or convene around the side of houses where one of them functioned as a *jackleg* mechanic (southerners use jackleg to reference an amateur who performs work otherwise done by a trained professional). These lazy afternoons would always give rise to a class on topics such as politics, women, race, money.

In teaching about race and class issues, these men would encourage younger men to either obey the rules of this stratified society or to ascribe to a different life. In retrospect, I understand the lessons more clearly; those younger men who would not go up north or leave for college would follow their fathers and uncles into the fields of White people. The older men knew this and explained the importance of maintaining manhood and not allowing anyone to break you, despite being subjected to extreme racism. Most Black men were borderline sharecroppers, repairmen, drivers, or plowers and pickers (plowing fields in spring and picking cotton or pulling corn in the fall) for Whites. These lived experiences formed both curricula and pedagogies for the lessons to be taught and learned. I recall one of Uncle George's lessons. He angrily described plowing all morning for Mr. Hancock, only to be offered lunch on the steps of the back door since the White family would not allow him to eat inside the house. Each day, Estella, the Hancock's cook and best friend to Uncle George's mother, handed the food to him, then closed the door. I seldom stopped to think how Estella felt, feeding a young man who was almost a second son to her, the way she fed her puppy.

I also recall a lesson from Reese, who worked at a local factory; he complained of not being able to write a check at a local store. His words, "These fucking White folk think Black folk ain't got no money!" He added that the Whites also

think all Black folk cheat, lie, and steal their way through the world, rather than work, make honest money, and spend it honestly. Uncle George, Reese, and others like them deeply hated their stations, but they did not see options. They also understood the art of acting out these roles in ways that did not intimidate the White men, thereby making situations worse for the Black men and their families. In other words, not only did these Black men carry resentment, and even hurt, deep in their spirits, but they also humbled themselves while in Whites' presence, pretending to be okay, shuffling in shame. When the White bosses were angry, they used extreme discourse to discipline these Black men, regardless of the Black men's ages. These were the day-to-day lived experiences of these men, and they used these experiences to prepare younger men like me for such a world. Unless the Black man is strong on multiple levels, this White world will break him, if not destroy him. In such a context, the extreme discourse concept and the cultural caring it spawns become practical teaching tools.

There is another side to this philosophy, and this is the side that I examine beneath a critical lens. More often than not, some portion of these lectures included commentary racist Whites would make about Blacks, rather than ideas Blacks would express about other Blacks. Common references included comments such as, "Black folk don't know how to save money," "Black folks can't keep nothing. They tear up everything they get, house, car, don't matter," and even "They [Blacks] ain't gonna ever work together. It aint' in their blood." I even recall crazy references like "Don't be like Bill. He ain't ever gonna be nothing but a no good *N*." Many of them downgraded Blacks as a group, casually tossing around the *N* word with ease and familiarity. I would often leave such discussions, thinking that Negroes as a group cannot achieve, for it's not in their collective ability.

On the other hand, they would privilege Whites as the standard for all that is appropriate, commenting on what people like, what they do, what types of clothes, houses, cars they buy. The discussion would situate White behavior as such to be emulated (juxtaposed to lines a minute earlier or later about how Whites treat Blacks like dogs). I learned this insight at the feet of my elders, including my grandmother. She refused to patronize the two Black grocery stores in our area. She justified her actions by saying, "They charge too much," although she never conducted any real research to compare the prices. She attended church with owners of one, and the owner of the other (Black) store was her dear friend; he visited us often, laughing and talking with Momma about their childhood days. Despite this, she refused to buy groceries from his store. Instead, she chose to grovel for credit from Mr. Schultz who refused to assist any Black customers until all Whites in his store had been served. Even if he or his wife were ringing up a month's grocery for a Black, he pushed the entire stack of groceries aside if a White entered, even if the White person only purchased a single Coca-Cola. As I put this in context, I now realize that regardless of the prices at the Black-owned stores, the White store exacted a greater tax on Black people than the Black stores. I know these conversations helped shape layers of my identity and some of my practices. This study provided me with a context for all of this. It is obvious to me

that these teachers were reflecting the schizophrenic larger society in which they functioned. They learned many of their lessons at the hands of racist White people, only to internalize and replicate these lessons in their own communities. On one hand, they respond negatively to the racist treatment from Whites; at the same time, however, they replicate the extreme discourse and racial stereotyping to their sons and neighbors. In effect and without knowing it, these men helped disburse seeds of racism in their own communities. I know that some of these seeds fell upon my psyche and took root. Perhaps my extreme discourse with James is just a replication of Mr. Hancock's extreme discourse with Uncle George, and Uncle Willie's extreme discourse with me. This study carried me to this space of reflection, and my visit has triggered many questions: Did these men teach me to always be suspect of myself and other Black men? Was the extreme discourse of all my teachers a collective echo of White men's extreme discourse with them when they (the Black men) were in trouble? Is the practice of this type of cultural caring really little more than intra-cultural racism? What resulted from the hidden and the null curriculum aspect of these lessons?

I feel it necessary to emphasize an important point at this juncture in the chapter. Although I do suggest that in this case Blacks were guilty of teaching some form of racism, I by no means suggest that this shifts the burden for a racist society from the shoulders of privileged White America. In fact, this practice of intra-group oppression illustrates how successful White America has been in constructing an American racism. This internalized prejudice exists in all Communities of Color. In this context, Blacks have learned to fear, suspect, and even reject each other. Unless everyone engages in deep reflection around the *why* and the *source* of values and practices, all of us are guilty of promoting some type of prejudice, including inter- and intra-racist notions.

It is important to note that these teachers were monolingual; in other words, they knew only one discourse, one form of teacher practice, one form of cultural caring: the extreme discourse. Most were products of a vicious and racist cycle where they experienced extreme discourse from their White bosses (in the fields and in the factories) and from their Black fathers (in the home and sometimes on the job, helping in the fields), who learned it from both their White bosses and Black fathers. Most were not even high school graduates, and virtually none were college graduates. Most had not traveled more than fifty miles from home during their lives, and all were blue-collar factory workers or even no-collar field hands. How and where would they learn another form of discourse or teaching? The reference to formal education certainly is not an implication that such a form of learning in itself provides one with multiple modes of discourse, let alone the values and sensibilities discourse reflects. It does however suggest that such education provides exposure to other lifestyles, other possibilities, and even other options for articulating ideas. This in turn challenges existing values and ideas, which can lead to transformation of ideas, values, and beliefs. These men had none of this, so they could only teach the world what had been taught to them, and they could only teach it in the way it was taught to them. I don't know if I'm prepared to suggest that these conditions justified the actions of my early Black male teachers, but I

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know that I am prepared to fight their condemnation, even if that fight is with myself. I don't know that I was at this place prior to this self-study.

A KEY CONCERN

I regard a critical analysis of my own early schooling — and my educational practices — as an analysis that lies beyond the space of judging or of being judgmental. I see this as an effort to enter, explore, and engage all aspects of the concept, looking at how this thing connects past and present and vice-versa. In applying this notion to my early schooling and current practices, I do not judge my teachers and I do not judge myself, regardless of what the analysis yields, for I do not think we can hold one accountable for what one does not know. Mr. Wilson, Mr. Jones, and Uncle Willie, among others, did not know the full scope of what they taught me, and, prior to this study, I had no idea of what I was teaching James. Within that context, this study has yielded one important concern that I must address, now that I am aware of its possible presence.

These lessons helped prepare me for life as an African American male in many ways. They also helped me value education as a means of acquiring a different lifestyle. I now see other elements of those lessons, including internalized oppressions, more specifically a suspicion of Black people as a group. Somewhere in those lessons I learned to doubt my own people, and perhaps to doubt myself in the process. As an adult professional, I constantly question my abilities to perform just about any task, regardless of historical accolades, awards, recognitions for that task. During a graduate class, one African American classroom teacher commented about how she continually doubts herself and questions the quality of her work. I felt like she was speaking my story, but even more fascinating: I looked around the classroom and nearly every Person of Color was shaking his or her head in agreement. Perhaps there is an Uncle Willie, a Mr. Jones, and the shade tree teacher in every Black community; perhaps my conversations are the same as the vast majority of Black people across the country. And just perhaps those certain segments of those lessons (conversations) press Black people to question themselves as part of a larger group that is doubted. I reiterate that these teachers created their lessons from their experiences with their White bosses and supervisors who always suspect these Black men of being dishonest, of lacking the intelligence to function as professional (whatever that really means) men, and who treat them as children. I am indeed concerned that my engagement of Black men students who are in trouble is partially informed by internal racism, and that (in that same context) I continue to speak the same language as my father, his father, and more dangerously: the language of their White overseers, bosses, landlords. When all is said and done, is this really the essence of my discourse with and overall engagement of James?

Could I have already judged and sentenced James prior to him physically entering my office based on some of my early lessons about Black men in trouble? There is a wealth of data to support the notion that Black men (and people) must always function beneath a cloud of suspicion, regardless of their true actions.

Brent Staples's (1986) critical essay, "Black Men in Public Space," states that Black men literally change all public space they enter. By their mere presence, Black men transform a space from safe and comfortable to one filled with potential crime, civil disorder, and at the very minimum much suspicion, which in itself translates to a lack of safety and comfort. People (not just Whites, but mainly this group) cross the street upon approaching a Black man, especially at night; women clutch their purses more tightly as a Black man passes; and everyone becomes slightly more alert, aware, and cautious in the presence of a Black man. Staples uses his own experiences as a graduate student at the University of Chicago and as a teacher in New York as examples. Like my early teachers, Staples draws his lessons from his own experiences. In his examples, everyone assumes that he (a Black man) is already guilty of some crime or is more inclined to committing a crime, all because he is Black. Could I have assumed James more guilty than innocent, and could I have cast this assumption even before he walked into my office?

James figuratively entered my office via my very first conversation with the Financial Aid officer about him; he figuratively re-entered upon my reading his files and through subsequent discussions of his case. He could have changed the space of my office from a theoretical safe space for Black men who are in trouble to a space that assumed this Black man completely guilty and totally responsible for his own actions. I realize that if that change occurred, then I not James made it happen. When his body arrived, there is a real possibility that I had already reached a verdict without even needing to hear his story; I had already read institutional files and talked with others about him. While he certainly must bear a great deal of the responsibility for his situation and for changing it, there is still the possibility that my early schooling could have helped me assign him more responsibility than is rightfully his.

It could have shaped my pedagogy of extreme discourse with him, and it could very well have made me think (to myself), "No matter what you do for him [them Blacks], it's never going to be enough," a comment one of my teachers made many years ago. They keep coming back for more, rather than using what you give them to make their own way — a very racist philosophy when applied to groups, rather than to individuals. This brutally honest insight is a revelation on my part.

Traditional schools have a rich and long history of practicing institutional racism and classism. There is still the possibility that my nearly twenty-one years teaching and working at White universities reinforced my own latent prejudices against Black men in trouble. Herbert Kliebard (1999) provides an historical context for racist educational philosophy, especially regarding African American men. He reminds us that early White missionaries and school administrators believed that Negroes lacked the ability to discipline themselves and that they innately lacked the will to aspire toward concepts such as good character, moral principles, and aesthetic values. Therefore any educational experience for them must revolve around "hard [physical] work" (p. 13) as a means of developing discipline and values. As Kliebard reports, Samuel Chapman Armstrong, founder of Hampton Institute in 1868, provided a strong voice on this philosophy of Negro

education and used it as a cornerstone for Hampton's teaching and practices. Armstrong fully believed that these ex-slaves innately lacked a character sufficient for civilization in the way Whites could experience civilization; he labeled this problem, a deficiency of character, as due to the Negro's tropical blood.

This philosophy helped pave the way for Armstrong and other White educators' insistence that industrial education comprise the center of the Negro's educational experience. In addition, these leaders institutionalized this philosophy (as well as other racist thoughts about Blacks) via their leadership of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Kliebard (1999) also informs us that one of Armstrong's prize pupils was none other than Booker T. Washington, who founded Tuskegee Institute. Contemporary predominantly White colleges and universities (PWIs) still contain residues of their exclusive cultures, including this reconstituted version of this tropical blood philosophy, i.e., the idea that Black men lack the morals, values, ethics and the ability to discern right on a spiritual plane. As a result, whether students, faculty, or staff, this group is constantly suspected of doing or not doing something. How much of this institutional racism have I absorbed about myself and my people? Paulo Freire (1970), in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, argues that the ultimate goal of liberation is not to destroy the oppressor but *to out* the oppressor that lives within us. If I am to successfully challenge schools on their institutional racism, I must first examine my own prejudices, planted deeply within my psyche. Perhaps, just perhaps, had I done this earlier, I would have engaged James differently. However, I am by no means prepared to admit that I would not have challenged him to accept and to change his responsibilities, but maybe I would have done that differently.

ONGOING QUESTIONS

Although this study is ongoing, if not a life-long process, I have reached several tentative conclusions about my educational practices. First, Mr. Williams, Mr. Jones, and Uncle Willie indeed influenced my current discourse with Black male students who are in trouble. Furthermore, their lessons to me were shaped by and within their own struggles against White racist oppressors. Despite all of my formal education and status as a global citizen, I reproduce much of that same discourse and its original elements. I also realize more fully now that I possess and should practice a diversity of discourse (rather than just one) with Black male students who are in trouble. I already know that no two Black people are exactly the same; therefore, I should not consistently lump this group of diverse individuals into one Black mass, assuming the same prescriptive sermon will save each one. Again, my early teachers knew only one way to communicate important lessons: varying forms of the extreme discourse. To expect them to practice a pedagogy beyond what they know and/or to expect them to speak a language that is foreign to them is both unfair and unrealistic.

Finally, I think Wolcott (2002) was correct — in ways that too few understand — in his notion about one's inability to teach without violating some aspect of ethics. Every decision is influenced by some prejudice, whether negative or

positive; teaching is no different. I acknowledge my biases (as best I can identify them) with James. I realize that all of my other practices also contain some type of prejudice and in some way either privilege or punish someone who does not deserve either. Either way, I violate some element of ethics, if not morality. To save minds, spirits, and souls requires our entering intimate spaces of our pupils to challenge the very elements in general that threaten our students and youth; likewise, our mere presence in those spaces often violates some ethic. At the same time, however, the more time I spend with myself the more I realize the scope and depth of truths in the comment, “Timothy, it’s probably some combination of everything you said.” If we are to salvage our youth — and ourselves — and if we are to use education as a means of creating a better society, then we must continue to enter those spaces, invited or uninvited. In following this philosophy, we will intrude upon the privacy of our students (and of our children), but in doing so we reach toward a higher goal: the liberation of our youth and ourselves. In such cases, we take action and then utter the words of Jesse Jackson to the United States Democratic Party at the 1984 Democratic Convention, “If...I have caused anyone discomfort, created pain, or revived someone's fears . . . please forgive me. Charge it to my head and not to my heart” (Jackson, 1984).

When I first began thinking about this self-study, I talked through the concept with a colleague, seeking her thoughts on just what actually shapes my extreme discourse with Black male students who are in trouble. I discussed my thoughts on (Black) cultural caring, the urgency of helping young Black men understand how racism reduces their chances for success. I shared how my early mentors and teachers were very direct with me, and I even noted the possibility of my own prejudices against these students. After asking several questions and sharing a similar study she co-wrote, my colleague leaned on the table between us. Silently engaged in her own thoughts (or perhaps in my thoughts), she paused, then spoke softly yet firmly, “Timothy, it’s probably some combination of everything you said.” I slightly resented her implying the possibility that I could be prejudiced, especially against Black people. In retrospect, I realize that I wanted her to tell me I was wrong about the internalized prejudices. The more I (re)read and reflect upon this self-study

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

I suggest that teachers at all levels of schooling facilitate their own self-study that explores multicultural and/or background differences. The process does not need to be as complicated or as extensive as the one I undertook and described in this chapter, but it can be developed in some form. This studying of one’s self can help teacher educators better understand their values, behaviors, and practices. It can also help the teacher improve his or her job in understanding how unconscious perspectives, values, and attitudes inform the act of teaching. While I stress that teachers should engage in a self-study, I also emphasize that the practice can benefit anyone who engages with a diverse group of people(s). I chose teaching and differences or multiculturalism as contexts for this study because of my own

work in the field of education. After leaving the classroom eighteen years ago, I began working in the area of multicultural affairs. For the past eighteen years, I have dealt with and challenged institutional racism and similar prejudices in higher education. I know that teachers at all levels of schooling (re)shape the very identity of students. Given this power dynamic in the classroom, teachers in particular have a responsibility to consciously face their biases; otherwise, it is the prejudices, not the teacher that ultimately shapes the students and their learning.

Within that context, I suggest that teachers begin a self-study that centers on their early experiences with people who are from a *different* background (than that of the teacher). The subject (the teacher) can define different, noting that different should encompass that which evokes discomfort, angst, and/or fear (such as race, culture, ethnicity, sexuality/sexual preferences, socio-economic class). These areas of difference often fuel many of America's prejudices. These are also the issues that we must discuss in our classrooms, homes, and similar spaces if we're going to construct a just society.

Teachers, as well as students, come to the classroom with prejudices (Spraggins, 2004, p.172). However, it is common for many teachers, as well as other professionals, to think of themselves as free of any type of bias or prejudice. They likewise view themselves as treating all their students fairly. Teachers may believe prejudices, racial or otherwise, may exist in their classrooms through their students and their families, but not through their own teaching practices. That is why self-study of one's own biases is so critical. Most people fail to realize that many biases hide latent deep within one's psyche — often as residues from early communities of practice — waiting for just the right encounter to trigger or to inform an action. One way to examine the interaction between our own practice and bias is through questioning ourselves, seeking to understand why we privilege one action over another. For example, in keeping with the teacher scenario, if there is a disagreement between a White student and a Black student, and the teacher agrees with the White student, the teacher should reflect upon not only the elements of the disagreement but also upon his or her perspectives on issues such as race, gender, class, and others. Why did he or she make that decision? What were key elements of his or her decision, and what specifics about either student helped shape that decision? As the teacher, was equal time given to both students? Were the White student and the Black student given a chance to explain his or her version? Whether it is race, gender or other difference issues, is internalized oppression within the teacher providing impetus to the decision making process? The key point here is for teachers to engage themselves in an honest dialogue around the reasons for their action(s) or the reasons for their lack of action(s) in situations that involve diversity (however the teacher defines it). Since decisions are informed by values, which in turn are rooted in earlier experiences, exposures, and events, or the lack thereof, examining the process by which decisions and choices are made can provide insights into one's interactions with difference.

HOW TO CONDUCT THIS STUDY

There are two ways to begin this self-study, and both revolve around what Cris Cullinan (2000) calls one's communities of practice. She posits that these communities determine one's values, perspectives, and beliefs about the world; these values in turn form early in a child's life and become difficult to change as the child evolves into and throughout adulthood. Within a contexts of race, racism, and prejudices, Cullinan argues that these communities both directly and indirectly shape children's attitudes about The Other and people who are different in any way. She defines the communities of practice as immediate family, grandparents, neighbors, Sunday school classes, youth groups, and peer groups in all spaces, and these communities of practice help forge a young person's identity, complete with thoughts about what makes them different from—and in many cases, better than—those who are different. I agree with Cullinan and further suggest that we retain lessons from these circles in the forms of voices that continue to whisper to us throughout our adulthood. Unless we take conscious measures to counter these voices they inform all areas of our lives, including our work. On an intellectual level, we know that many of these stories are not factual, but silencing them often remains difficult, regardless of how ridiculous they sound.

Two quick examples: I have a friend who still recalls childhood stories from her mother, one of which said that people whose eyebrows grow together — across the forehead — are emotionally disturbed. My friend actually believed that all of her youth and teen years. My friend became a kindergarten teacher who eventually taught a student whose eyebrows had grown together. She knew intellectually that the eyebrow situation in itself did not constitute a specific intellectual capacity or learning style for her student; at the same time, however, she acknowledges struggling with her mother's voice about *those people* and even being suspect about this student. She would find herself thinking that his mistakes on homework — which were the same mistakes made by other students — might validate her mother's early teachings. As ridiculous as this story might sound, it represents a realistic struggle to reconcile a teacher's prejudice learned from her early community of practice. This teacher wanted to practice responsible teaching, and worked hard to raise that prejudice to a conscious level and then confront it openly. My friend often shares this story in her lectures about prejudices in the classroom. Another example lies in one of my early communities of practice. I am a southern, Black male who grew up hearing stories of how Black men must never trust White women. My uncles and other Black men often encouraged young Black men to avoid being alone in any space with a White woman. The older Black men would passionately lecture that all White women deeply fear all Black men, thinking Black men possess an innate and uncontrollable sexual lust for White women. As a result, Black men risk their lives when they are alone with White women, for these women interpret any gesture or movement that may produce contact between the two as an unsolicited sexual advance. The woman then assumes this casual brushing against her body will escalate into rape. Of course, she then runs from the space, screaming for her White husband, brother, father or son. As an adult, I have

cast these stories within the confines of legitimate scholarship, which in turn makes meaning of and gives reason to their existence. During the early twentieth century, the scientific communities portrayed (and attempted to scientifically assess) Black people as less than human (Cone 2000; Lewis, 1993; McLaren, 1998). Lewis (1993) informs readers that anthropologists sought to scientifically assess Blacks as a form of life with a volatile and uncontrollable sexual lust that often erupts beyond their ability to control. Quite naturally, this analysis placed Blacks within the same context as animals that perform sexual acts without guidance from notions of civility, privacy, humanness. In addition, this notion of Blacks and especially of Black men was reinforced through schooling, religion, and certainly teachings at home. As a child listening to these lectures that I should fear White women, I did not understand the context, but as an adult who has researched the issue, I find that I continue to struggle with the duality of the notion. In other words, there is validity in the teachings of my community of practice, and this validity is supported by contemporary research. At the same time, however, I also have a responsibility to sort through those lectures in ways that teach me not to dismiss those White women who consciously challenge their teachings — however subtle — that Black people (and Black men) are sexual predators, comparable to the beast of the field.

As a Black male transitioning from the world of my Black male, blue-collar teachers, I quickly found myself confused by what appeared as the very opposite of what I had been taught. As a college student, I regularly came in contact with White female classmates via study groups, who did not seem to fit the stereotype I had learned. As a teacher, I needed to meet during office hours with my White female students, most of whom did not fit inside this stereotype. And as a colleague, I often have had one-to-one conversations with my White female colleagues, all of whom seemed quite comfortable in my presence. As a student, a young teacher, and a new colleague, I was often behind closed doors with these White women! This was totally counter to all that I had been taught, and I could not completely silence my uncles' voices. As with other blanket prejudices, I often struggled to reconcile those lessons with my perception of my current reality. The point of sharing these two stories is to illustrate how communities of practice promote prejudices and how these stories remain with us. In an honest disclosure, I still do not know that I have completely dismissed the voices of my uncles and neighbors regarding White women; I feel that to do so translates into an open invitation for trouble, for I still find value and relevance in their teachings. My responsibility, as I see it, is to NOT hold all White women accountable. At the same time, however, I must realize that there is still a cadre of twenty-first century White women who fall into that twentieth century profile (raised by my uncles) of White women afraid of Black men. Both my friend and I had to replay our stories and assess them within a twenty-first century context of justice and equity. In addition, we understand that our lives as teachers are very different from the lives of our parents and families in the 1960s. I encourage the teachers interested in engaging in such a self-study to consider similar factors if they find themselves in a situation like that of my friend and me.

The first approach to the self-study involves the teacher choosing a group that causes him or her some discomfort, disgust, or fear. This could be Blacks, Whites, Jews, gays or lesbians, southerners, Appalachians, Mexicans, or a group representing difference to the teacher. The next step is to engage in deep reflection of how two or three of his or her early communities of practice engaged this group. In other words, recall how childhood circles treated, discussed, or portrayed this group; this reflection can also include actual encounters with members of this group. Communities of practice include family, immediate and extended; early schooling, including the relationships formed in this setting; the neighborhood, immediate neighbors and the overall community; Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts; church and Sunday school classes; and other similar spaces. As an example, one's *focus* group could be Blacks. Questions for self might include the following: Was there ever any conversation about Blacks? If so, what was a consistent theme about this group? What were the emotions, i.e. non-verbals, tones, tenor, unspoken references or implications of these discussions? Was there no conversation whatsoever about Blacks (and what does that mean)? Were there any Blacks in any of my communities of practice? If so, what were their roles and how were they treated? The subject should spend some time each day for about two weeks, reflecting on these discussions and taking notes to capture the memories. Visit each group more than once, for the replaying of a conversation for the second or even third time often produces more details. The teacher should then look for themes among the chosen communities: were there consistent messages about Blacks? What were the messages? Which resonated more?

An optional approach is to begin with one's communities of practice, rather than with a specific focus group. The teacher should identify two or three communities of practice that were significant in his or her early schooling through high school and relive those groups' experiences with people who were different. Again, the teacher looks for themes that show how different communities delivered the same or similar lessons about certain people. Was the target group constantly missing — not even discussed — from these communities of practice and/or was the conversation about — as well as the treatment of — this group consistent in the communities of practice? As mentioned in the former paragraph, the subject should spend two weeks or so, revising conversations and events over a span of early schooling to high school, taking notes along the way.

The teacher should lay his or her notes on the past aside and begin a self-study of current practices. Reflect upon the last two, maybe three years of student engagement, focusing on students who represent the focus group already identified. This could take an additional week or so. Make careful notation of the details surrounding those engagements considered significant. Be sure to spend sufficient time assessing those engagements that revolve around conflict, as well as those requiring difficult, major decisions. Studying the notes, the teacher should now ask questions such as, What was I really thinking — but did not articulate — during my engagement of that student/person? What key factors influenced my decision in this case? Had I already reached a semi-conclusion before exploring the case, and did I look for evidence to support that feeling I already had? The teacher

should then seek bridges between the past and the present; in other words, look for connections between contemporary practices and past conversations from those early communities of practice. A key goal of this activity is to identify ways in which those communities continue to inform current practices, especially those practices that may reflect some degree of bias or prejudice.

If one is honest in this exercise, then he or she will revive specific memories. In addition, the subject or teacher will likely connect bridges between past and present. Examined within the context of an adult and a just context, some memories might be painful because of how people were treated and because of the way a person dispensed a treatment or spoke certain words. This exercise continues to fascinate me for other insights it often yields. It often shows the ideological (Apple, 1990) agendas of institutions and citizenship groups (such as Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts), schools, church youth groups, and similar entities. These institutions proudly promote themselves as sanctuaries of justice, truth, and even morality. However, when analyzed in the context of a self-study, some of these same institutions and the people who lead them become revealed as incubators of racism and biases against innocent people. This exercise can also reveal unattractive characteristics of people who were or are very close to us. We might replay the words of a grandparent, a Sunday School teacher, a respected elder, and others that inform us that certain groups are genetically inferior, innately dishonest and lazy, or can never become civilized. Seeing a significant person in such a light can be painful. This experience can be even more painful if the teacher recalls himself or herself playing such a role. If this should be the case, then that teacher should study the events that became catalysts for change.

This self-study might also reveal positive bridges between the past and the present. Some teachers might recall discussions and experiences that were very inclusive and bridge those to current practices that are equally inclusive. I caution those who fall into this category not to view themselves as *saved* or free of biases or prejudices. They should either identify another group or find another behavior to assess, for everyone is biased against something, even if biased in overly compensating for a certain group or even enabling a group (assuming the group's historical marginalization applies to every member of the group) rather than holding some individuals accountable. While this self-study might not improve a technique of teaching, it can produce equally important outcomes: it can help the teacher become aware of and avoid showing unintentional biases toward students; it can help the teacher make similar connections in other venues of his or her life; and, it can help the teacher see prejudices — and to identify their sources — that have gone undetected for many years. In the end, a self-study can help all of us become both better teachers and better persons.

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Timothy Spraggins
DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, USA