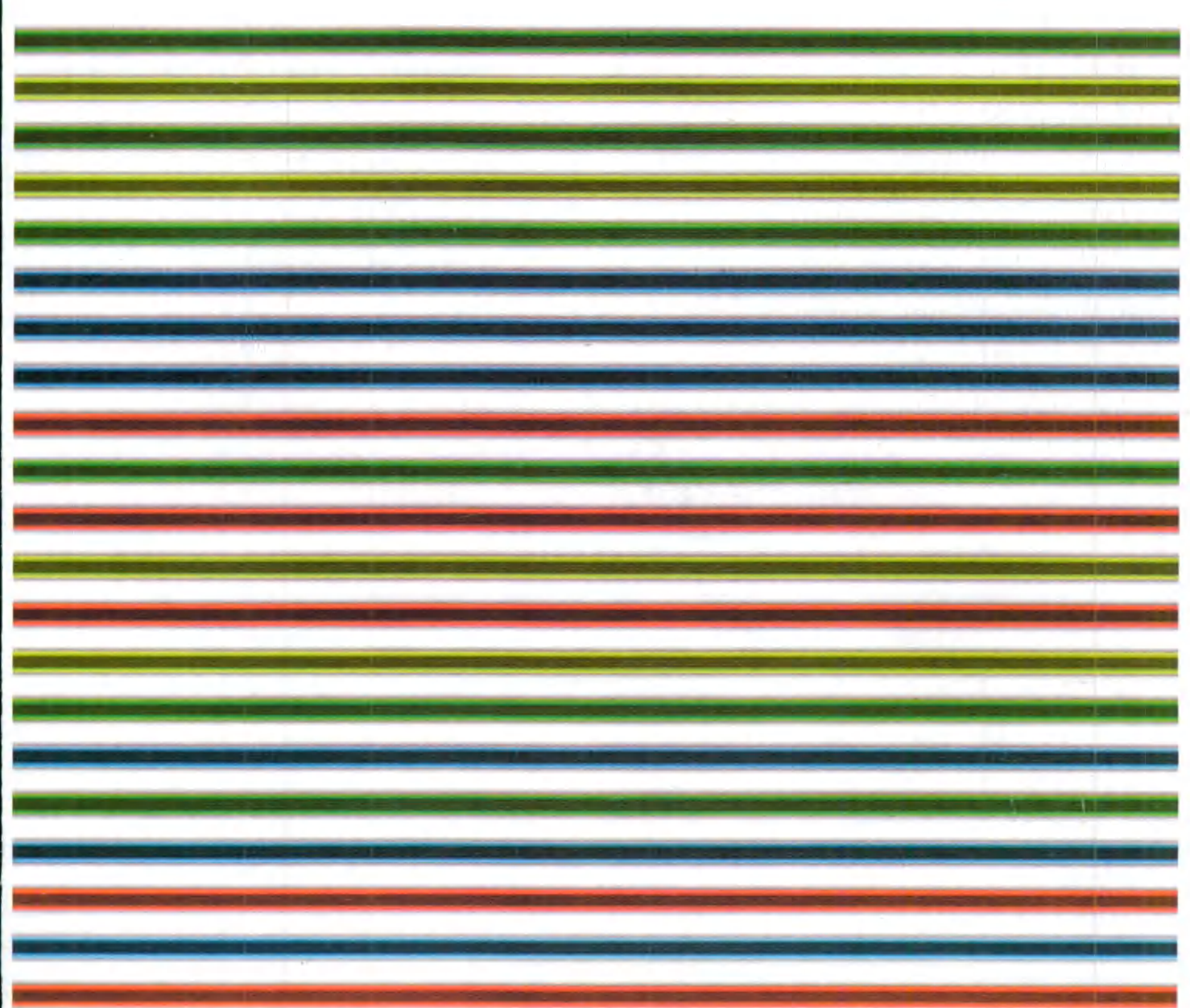


REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING



ISSUES OF PRIVILEGE IN SOCIAL WORK
AND OTHER HELPING PROFESSIONS

Volume 16, Number 1

Winter 2010

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NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE: ISSUES OF PRIVILEGE IN SOCIAL WORK AND OTHER HELPING PROFESSIONS

Guest Editor: N. Eugene Walls, Ph.D., University of Denver

The issue of privilege – unearned advantages that accrue to members of certain social groups solely because of membership in those groups, and at the cost to corresponding marginalized groups – has only recently started to emerge as a topic of scholarship in the social work literature and to become a topic addressed in social work classrooms (Curry-Stevens, 2007; Van Soest & Garcia, 2003; Walls et al., 2009). For years, as many of the authors included in this volume report in their own processes, social work educators have focused on marginalized populations, allowing us as a profession to avoid turning a critical gaze on ourselves, and the role that we play in maintaining oppression in our day-to-day lives and in our professional practice.

As a discipline, social work is not unique in this avoidance of such a critical gaze, as authors from other disciplines in this volume attest in their critique of their own chosen professions, whether higher education, communication studies, or student affairs. That is not to say that there have been no voices in social work challenging the way we do business, for there clearly have (Baines, 2007; Mulally, 2002), but those voices have tended to be pushed to the fringes of the discipline.

This collection of articles represents what I believe to be the first in a social work journal to bring together voices across the discipline (and other disciplines) to interrogate the concept of privilege and what it means for us as a profession committed to social justice. It is clear from the writings included here that

social workers – both in education and in practice – are thinking about and struggling with these issues. Our collective hope is that the publication of this collection will encourage even more practitioners and scholars to examine, write about, and challenge privilege in their day-to-day interactions with their colleagues, clients, friends, and families so we can move toward creating a more just world.

Notes on this Collection

While numerous types of privilege are examined in this volume (white privilege, male privilege, heterosexual privilege, Christian privilege, positional privilege), the reader will find that discussion of other types of privilege are largely absent (US/American privilege, cisgender privilege, etc.). This in no way is meant to suggest that these types of privilege are less important, but is rather a reflection of the embryonic state of the scholarship on privilege.

The narratives in this volume are arranged in three primary groupings by the themes of (a) critical self-reflexivity and emerging awareness, (b) privilege in the classroom and educational context, and (c) privilege in the context of social work practice. However you will find that many of the narratives successfully integrate two or all three of these themes.

Another note about this collection is that you will find authors who are writing from early in their personal and professional journeys in understanding the complexity of privilege, and you will find authors who have been grappling

with issues of power, oppression, and privilege for many years. We sought to include this wide range of voices as, no doubt, readers likewise will mirror this continuum of awareness.

One difficulty in writing about one's journey of awakening to issues of privilege is how to convey that process without sounding as if one thinks that one "has arrived" and that one now completely understands the complexity of privilege. This concern is particularly important because just broaching the topic of power, oppression, and privilege frequently triggers defensiveness and resistance, making writing from a place of humility especially important on this topic. In my various email, telephone, and face-to-face discussions of these manuscripts with the authors, this was not an infrequent topic that they themselves brought up or that was raised by the peer reviewers (or both in some cases). While some authors are more talented at conveying this necessary humility all have, in their own ways, wrestled with what it means for them on their journeys to increased awareness.

A second difficulty in telling one's story about this topic is the necessity for vulnerability on the part of the author. If one is to paint a picture of one's starting point in the process of emerging awareness, that means there must be recognition and acknowledgement that there was a time – perhaps very recently – that one embodied ignorance about privilege. Likewise, humility requires that one must also acknowledge that they are still in process, meaning that they continue to stumble on this journey. The authors have demonstrated extraordinary courage in acknowledging this to you – their peers. I applaud their courage.

Content of the Collection

The initial narrative, by Rachel Griffin, starts off the volume by taking stock of our current historical moment. She weighs the progress we have made that is symbolized in the election of Barack Obama as the first biracial, African American President of the United States, with the great distance we still have left to realize the promise of equality. She skillfully and poetically weaves her experience of attending Obama's inauguration

with both her personal trajectory of grappling with intersectionality and what that means for her as a woman of color examining the topic of privilege, and the historical reality of our society. As one anonymous reviewer suggested, her piece makes the perfect call to action to kick off this collection.

Critical Self-Reflexivity and Emerging Awareness

The next six manuscripts in the collection focus primarily on critical self-reflection and the arduous and often painful trajectory that the authors have followed in coming to recognize their privilege and how it shapes their lives and interactions. Diane Schmitz welcomes the shaking of the very foundation of her worldview as she makes peace with not feeling safe in her process of exploring the "whiteness curriculum of life." Colleen Dunne-Cascio acknowledges the bolts of lightning that sometimes jar us out of our complacency to recognize where we are in our own identity development, and then links racialized experiences of childhood with current beliefs. Peggy Proudfoot McGuire takes up the task of exploring the process of recognizing the marginalization of one's ethnic culture when one intimately knows the strengths of that culture, commenting on the relative nature of privilege and marginalization.

Ending up raising more questions than providing answers, Amy Lopez writes about the tension between her daily personal choices and her professional commitment to social justice. In doing so, she excavates (Kendall, 2006) her shame and the resistance to recognizing privilege as true recognition necessitates that action has to be taken if one is to live a life of integrity. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz charts her life trajectory and how different experiences with social movements along that trajectory shaped who she has become as a scholar and activist.

Lynn Parker not only shares her personal trajectory and those crucible moments in her life that pointed the direction to greater awareness for her, but then – in an excellent segue to the next sections – discusses models for integrating issues of social justice into

clinical practice and teaching about clinical practice.

Privilege in the Classroom and Educational Context

To kick off this section, Ann Curry-Stevens problematizes the “pedagogy of privilege” and interrogates her previously naïve stance of uncritically supporting this emerging pedagogy without taking into account how her own privileged identities shape her view of the approach. She also incorporates the notion of *positional privilege* (a frequently unmentioned and recognized form of privilege in the scholarship on privilege) and pushes toward a model of social work education that is held accountable to marginalized communities.

Brent Cagle grapples with the professional use of self in social work education and practice, and in doing so, acknowledges the costs of embodied teaching. Elizabeth Segal and her colleagues from Arizona State University look at the role of empathy and social empathy in teaching about privilege, offering ideas about how to support the development of social empathy in social work students. Tracing the pathway of the transmission of knowledge about the concept of privilege, Samuels and his colleagues look at how power, oppression, and privilege get recreated and fortified in everyday, mundane interactions, and offer an approach to teaching about privilege that may be helpful in reducing resistance in the learner.

In one of the most poetic pieces in the volume, Jim Davis-Rosenthal revisits the costs of embodied teaching that Cagle introduces in his earlier piece. He wrestles with the vulnerability of educators around their marginalized identities, the difficulty in working with students to increase comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty, and the tension that arises in classrooms when students are at very different places in their own process, as is almost always the case. He ends, asking us, like he asks his students, “Who will be more free because of the way you lived your life?”

Teaching about practice is not the only place in the educational process where the issue of privilege is omnipresent. The final two

articles in this section query doctoral education and the research enterprise. In a piece that captures a dialogue between a former social work doctoral student and her dissertation adviser, Hadidja Nyiransekuye and Susan Manning turn a critical gaze on how social work doctoral education can recreate marginalization for international students even as it calls for increased attention to cultural pluralism. Richard Jones, Jr., then, wraps up this section with a discussion of the tension between his scholar and activist identities, touching again on issues of intersectionality, the problem with too much focus on increasing awareness and too little on action, and makes ties back to Samuels and colleagues’ piece in terms of how we touch and shape others with whom we come into contact.

Privilege in the Context of Social Work Practice

Training and consulting on issues of power oppression, and privilege is fraught with numerous potential areas of contention and tension. Robin Parker leads off this section of writings exploring one particularly taboo intersection of identities, that between Black men and White women. His nuanced analyses offers an insightful look into how day-to-day interactions can embody larger historical narratives of the dominant culture. Abby Ferber uses a series of her experiences as a parent to illustrate everyday situations that offer the opportunity to intervene and increase her child’s awareness of privilege. Julie Todd, a minister and doctoral student, unflinchingly interrogates her identity as a Christian leading her to argue that the term “Christian supremacy” is both accurate and necessary if she is committed to challenging Christian privilege. To my knowledge, this is one of the first writings on Christian privilege in the scholarly literature that has been written by someone who currently embraces a Christian identity.

Heather Greene, takes a look at social work supervision in her own practice, as an opportunity to challenge privilege and the ways in which supervisors might use the concept to deepen the education of social work interns and those whom they supervise. Wrapping up

the volume is a piece by Chris Crass, who traces his development as a White anti-racist activist and ally and the challenges he experienced along the way to being a "traitor to whiteness" (Ignatiev, 1997; racetractor.org, 1993).

Conclusion

Whether picking up this volume of writings represents the first time you have read about and contemplated the issue of privilege, or is one more exploration in years of excavating the topic in your life and practice, I think you will find something valuable herein. No doubt some will argue vehemently against specific aspects of the various authors' experiences and interpretations, and perhaps even with the concept of privilege itself. However, what should become clear, is that the concept of privilege is making an impact on social work education and practice (and in other disciplines), and is not likely to disappear from the scholarly writings on multiculturalism for quite some time.

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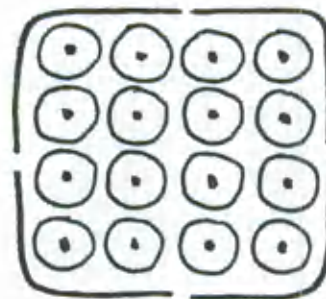
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"YES WE CAN," "YES WE DID," BUT NO WE HAVEN'T: MARKING A MOMENT WHILE REMEMBERING REALITY

Rachel Alicia Griffin, Ph.D., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

This narrative, written as a letter to those engaged in and those considering social justice as embodied activism, seeks to unite the author's yearnings for progress with reflections on lessons learned thus far on her own journey toward social consciousness. Although some may critique this style of writing as too informal or too immediate, the hope is that the use of the author's personal/academic voice (Ono, 1997) will create a space in which far more people are able to locate, hear, contemplate, challenge, and/or identify with her perspectives as an academic scholar whose work is always personal and political. This letter describes how she has come to understand voice as crucial in the struggle against oppression. The ways in which she has come to terms with privilege and marginalization at the intersections of identities is also explored. Lastly, she endeavors to create a critically self-reflexive space in which she and others can be held accountable for the ways we reproduce and affirm systems of privilege while simultaneously addressing how we might become more progressive.

June 5, 2009

To All Who May Listen,

I have felt this letter tugging at the corners of my mind for some time now. There have been times when the cravings to write this letter have been so strong that I have found myself scribbling relentlessly on whatever I could find. This letter has been birthed in all of the moments that I have smiled, cried, and wanted to scream until the ears and hearts of everyone around me pressed pause on the racing pace of life to stop and simply listen. The first time I considered writing this letter to you was while reading bell hook's (1989) thoughts on the power of "talking back." I found myself on her pages when she told me that:

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of "talking back," that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice. (p.9)

In reading her words over and over again, I came to realize that I was afraid of my own liberated voice. I was afraid not only that sensible words wouldn't flow if I beckoned but also of the secrets that my lips would spill if my mouth honestly answered my heart's request to speak. I was afraid of placing vulnerability center stage by choice in a world that already gazes upon me with contempt. Reflecting on the significance of learning how to talk back, Ono (1997) reminds me "...that when we are silent too often we start to lose our voices, our ability to speak out in defiance of mistreatment, of degradation, of humiliation, and of pain inflicted on our and others' bodies" (p.115). Pondering the recovery and loss of my liberated voice, I feel as though I am caught in the crossfire between the desire to be heard and the alleged safety of silence. Having decided to write to you it seems as though Audre Lorde's (1984) words have finally settled into my soul:

We can sit in our corners mute forever while our sisters and our selves are wasted, while our children are distorted and destroyed, while our earth is poisoned; we can sit in our safe corners mute as bottles, and we will still be no less afraid. (p.43)

Allowing her words to sink in, I have come to understand that she is excruciatingly accurate in a way that I wasn't willing to know until now. Hence living within my brown, female body, free from onerous scrutiny, fictitious accolades, and the cruel imposition of invisibility isn't a possibility and whether I voice my discontent with the domineering workings of the world or not, I will be afraid. I have also come to understand that to position speaking as a choice is in and of itself a privilege since many must speak just to survive (hooks, 1989) and still many have no space at all to give voice to their realities.

Seeking a way to grapple with and move through my fears, I discovered that others had written letters to "talk back" (hooks, 1989), speak truth to power (Scott, 1990), enlighten, arouse, implicate, share, and resist. Inspired by the creative works of Baldwin (1963), Ono (1997), and Calafell (2007), I have decided to move forward and write a letter to you relying on performative writing as a relational and embodied style of prose that is both expressive and liberating (Madison, 2005). Through this letter, I want to show you how performative writing offers a means for us to bear witness to our shared humanity. In doing so, I add my voice to the chorus of those who position performative writing as a method to avoid the homogenization of human experience and to insist upon the significance of rich personal narratives juxtaposed against the master narrative (Corey, 1998; Madison, 2005; Pelias, 2005). Yet, I am not only writing you a letter; if you read closely you will hear that I am sending you an invitation. Not an invitation that reads "agreement only" or "no conflict allowed," but rather an invitation into the messy complexity of finding a way to peacefully coexist across our differences. I welcome you into my subjective space which as you lift my words off the page will become our subjective space; a personal and yet public space for emotional engagement and deep reflection on possibility.

Like you, I imagine, I have found myself frustrated, saddened, and angered on my journey toward social consciousness. I have felt overwhelmed beyond words as I have learned to see the ways that my privilege

functions to harm and imprison others on the margins of society. This journey has required reckoning with the ways my brown, female-body carries the traces of history and bears the marks of indifference since as a woman of color I live in a society that did not intend and was not organized for people like me to live peacefully. Yet to do this work honestly I have also been required to reckon with the ways my privileged identities bear down on the efforts of others to free themselves from the very margins that I strive to surpass. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1995) offers intersectionality as a conceptual means to understand how people live at the intersections where race, nationality, age, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and region collide. According to Crenshaw (1995), to understand how power and privilege operate, there is a "need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (p.334). For me this means that I am a biracial (African American and Caucasian), heterosexual, able-bodied, U.S. American woman who doesn't identify with organized religion, who grew up in the Midwest in the lower-working class, but has since by way of a Ph.D. become part of the middle class. At the intersections this is who I am, juxtaposed within the systemic complexity of what Patricia Hill Collins (2000) calls the matrix of domination which refers to the social hierarchies of power in "which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained" (Collins, 2000, p.228).

Housed within the matrix, I have had to learn (and continue to learn) to position my privileged identities as being of equal importance to my marginalized identities, despite the hegemonic encouragement to maintain the invisibility of privilege. More specifically, I have come to understand that all of the ways the world tells me "yes" are just as important to my journey in life as the ways that the world tells me "no." In this vein, Audre Lorde (1983) comes to mind with her strong declaration that "There is no hierarchy of oppressions" (p.9). Extending Lorde's (1983) powerful insight, Beverly Tatum (2000) offers, "The thread and threat of violence runs through all of the isms. There is a need to

acknowledge each other's pain even as we attend to our own" (p.13). Working from their insights, I draw a heightened sense of shame. Hence, as a woman of color I have been taught to position racism and sexism as more important than for example, heterosexism and ableism—as if my pain is somehow greater than the pain of others. Moving toward accountability and a critical turning point in my own consciousness, I have come to believe that oppression at the intersections is not about hurting more or less, but rather it is about hurting differently. From this vantage point, there is no need to delve into what Kendall (2006) calls the "Pain Olympics" (p.91) or what I would more bluntly describe as a social justice equivalent to a patriarchal pissing contest. In essence, I believe that painful lived experiences such as poverty, hate crime, and sexual assault hurt deeply across any identities that one holds. Using myself as a survivor of sexual assault as an example, I do not believe that I hurt more than a heterosexual White female survivor or less than a Latina lesbian survivor. Rather we all hurt differently and although those differences are very significant, our pain is equally tragic. Moving away from the imposed hierarchy of oppressions, which ironically mimics the dominant systems social justice aims to dismantle, has been difficult and yet, I remain committed to the undoing of hierarchies that prioritize whose pain is more worthy of public address. Should many myself and you included, continually deconstruct hierarchies, I believe that our combined forces will astonish those who have a vested interest in swallowing our efforts whole. However, should we continue to work against each other (for example, heterosexual woman ousting lesbians; U.S. Americans of color discriminating against immigrants; gay White men dismissing the racialized experiences of gay men of color etc.), then our valuable time and energy will be spent in a struggle among marginalized groups rather than our efforts being dispensed against the larger systems that function to keep us all on the margins of power.

I want to share the moment with you when the importance of this hard lesson became clearer to me. I was standing among the masses of people on the Washington Mall when

a biracial Black man, preceded only by White men, became the President of the United States of America. Together, we watched him be sworn in to "preserve, protect, and defend" the U.S. Constitution which at its inception wasn't written to secure the rights and liberties of people who look like him. He stood on a balcony of a building that was built by slaves, and his strong presence commanded respect. A command that we know throughout most of U.S. American history would have gotten him killed. Together, we listened as Barack Obama addressed the world for the first time as President. He spoke of hope, crisis, humility, determination, strength, and endurance. As he spoke, some appeared mesmerized while others cheered; some smiled while others seemed to be praying with their eyes squeezed tightly shut and their palms open to the sky, and some simply nodded with tears flowing down their cheeks. Taking in the crowd around me, I was touched deeply by the realization that people had worked together across their differences to earn this arguably unimaginable and yet very real moment. My partner and I were surrounded by folks of various skin tones; there were people with canes, crutches, and wheelchairs; children and adults of all ages; and when I closed my eyes to allow my ears a chance to just listen, I could hear more languages being spoken than I could count. Even more amazing is that despite the millions of people who descended on the capitol and became of pool of identity, ideological, and material differences—there was a tangible force of positive energy in the air. We seemed to be listening as our new President called for community, dialogue, and service in the hopes of creating a more equitable world. Since January, I have been struck by the prospect that the election of Barack Obama marks the beginning of a new era for social justice. However, for him to fulfill his potential as President, each of us in our own families, neighborhoods, and communities will need to make a diligent effort to bond through, rather than in spite of, our differences for more than an inaugural moment. And our bonds will need to be nourished with time, commitment, and earned trust. There is part of me that wants to approach you with patient encouragement and

yet the words of Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. (1964) settle heavily on my mind. "It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment." The word "fatal" dances back and forth between my ears telling me that the time for patience has long passed. I need you and you need me, now. Together, we need to move forward in a fierce critique of the ways that seemingly boundless apathy cruel disregard, dangerous contempt swim across our shared oceans.

Although some may perceive my views as too idealistic or even radical, I must say that I truly believe that we have an opportunity before us; a chance to change the tides of indifference toward oppression and suffering. Not to be overly naïve, I understand that President Obama is a new leader immersed within traditional, obsolete, and detrimental systems of domination. Nevertheless, I remain adamant that the oppressive realities endured by most of the population in our world today do not reflect the best of what we can do as a people. Oftentimes, I find myself in an adult toddler tantrum cynically asserting that "this" (meaning the world as it is) can't possibly be the best we can do. In contradiction to my sarcastic optimism, Robert Jensen (2009) reminded me on a rainy and thus already gloomy night that we live in a world that is "profoundly unjust and fundamentally unsustainable." From his view, rooted in the type of harsh love that I have grudgingly learned to treasure on my quest for social consciousness, the title of my essay should read: "'Yes We Can,' 'Yes We Did,' but No We Can't." Oddly, in many ways I agree with his grave assessment of the realities of domination, consumerism, and the damage that has already been done to the earth that sustains us. However, I am not yet in a space where I am willing to relinquish possibility despite our catastrophic conditions. My heart won't allow me to deeply hear that perhaps we have just gone too far. Inside of myself, I feel the need to speak to you—to feel you—to implicate us. In this vein I am going to continue to write to you, rooted in a politic of wistful hope that we can and we will do better even if we are drastically limited given what cannot be undone. Between you and me, I believe that if

we don't do better then we will die within ourselves long before the earth swallows us up in the cycle of life and death. As I move forward with this letter, I am reminded by Pritchett (2009) to "Write as if you are dying—because, of course, you are" (p.52).

Together, I believe that we can build communities large and small that are rooted in respect, support, and consciousness. Searching desperately for a reason that will convince you, perhaps our common ground in moving toward community is the shared need for more compassion. I have yet to meet a person who can't use more compassion in their life. Likewise, speaking to the spaces where interests converge, if history has taught us anything, it has taught us that our lives are intertwined across our differences whether we want them to be or not. Looking at the harsh realities of poverty, imprisonment, healthcare, education, consumption, and war (just to name a few) that far too many people know intimately, we can see what happens when compassion and humility are overcome by hate, greed, and apathy within our communities and beyond. Our choices to generate change and ask others to do the same will be influenced by our access to resources. For some of us, a choice in favor of community might mean making an effort to genuinely listen to folks who identify with marginalized identity groups and bear the brunt of decisions that are made in the best interest of a privileged few. Others may ask a family in need to dinner without the expectation of a favor owed or ask to share a lawnmower instead of buying a new one when the old one breaks down. (I never have understood why every house on any given block requires its own lawnmower what is the shame or discontent in sharing?) Some may realign budgets to help alleviate the pain of those trapped in exhausting cycles of existence just to cling to the brink of comfort where comfort is rarely found. Still others will answer Lorde's (1984) call for "the transformation of silence into language and action" (p.42) mirrored by Jensen's (2009) call to utilize privilege to say the things that others might be punished for saying which necessitates taking a public stance against the forces of oppression that labor to keep people on the margins of

society starving for respect, dignity, and opportunity. Embracing practicality, I understand that change is cumbersome and that those with access to abundant privilege have vested interests in stifling progress. I must also admit that I am discouraged by the marked absorption of dominating practices by members of marginalized communities as well, myself included of course. bell hooks (2000a; 2004) and Wendell Berry (1992; 2000) call out patriarchy, sexism, racism, indulgent consumption, and technological obsession to name a few and I might add an all too common sense of complicity with and indifference toward human suffering as well. At times I feel as though I am angrier at myself and others who bear the weight of oppression for perpetuating the isms since we are intimately familiar with the inhumane costs. Often lost in anger, frustration, and sense of powerlessness; I find myself located within a deep well of pessimism simultaneously wishing to draw you in and keep you out.

Despite the pessimism that seems permanently lodged in my gut, after attending the inauguration I returned home more convinced than ever before of the precious chance that our change in leadership has brought to our horizons. Unlike years past, there is a possibility that progressive ideologies might flow from the top down or at least not be instantaneously dismissed in theory and practice. In my heart of hearts, I am convinced that our new administration has something to offer those of us who seek progressive change. Likewise, I am convinced that despite our present circumstances that we can devise new ways of everyday being. At the extreme risk of being nauseatingly cliché, "Yes We Can" do better as a people to reach out across our differences and live our lives in ways that do not reproduce systems of domination bolstered by false promises of meritocracy freedom, and equality. Together, we can work harder individually and collectively in the places and spaces we move in to communicate our shared interest in emotional, psychological, and physical survival. We can work to extend a hand that indicates, regardless of agreement, the understanding that someone's beliefs, values, and experiences are equally as

important to them as our own are to us. I can invite you and you can invite me. I can listen to you and you can listen to me. I can disagree with you and you can disagree with me. I believe that all of this can be done without the contemporary staples of objectification, exploitation, and hate. Will this humanizing approach always work—doubtful in an era of extreme warfare, biological terrorism, and nuclear threats—yet, *we can do better*. In the embrace of optimism, I think it would be unwise to expect perfection in an imperfect world. However, looking outward through cynical lenses, I feel affirmed in telling you once again that "this" (meaning the world as it is) cannot possibly be the best we can do.

Returning to my memories of D.C., I arrived home with a replenished understanding of my social responsibility to listen, to learn, and to educate in my day-to-day life. I face these responsibilities feeling inundated by a sense of powerlessness since exclusion based on beliefs, values, stereotypes, assumptions, norms, and the exploitive desire to selfishly profit is deeply rooted in our world. It seems that I have been "thrown into a story that pre-exists and post-exists me. A story and a history that is already unfolding and being told" (Lewis, 2006, p.832). Amidst the distaste for powerlessness that now coats my typing tongue, I feel a strong sense of limited agency as a brown woman in higher education. In a stark moment of clarity at the struggle that remains, Becky Thompson's (2009) brilliantly plain assertion that "The academy is not a healing place" comes to mind. There are not many things in life that I am certain of, and yet, I am certain that she is right. I am also certain that those who have dedicated their energy, time, resources, risked their family's lives, and surrendered their own have not done so for us to embrace blissful ignorance or ignorant praxis. As I speak to you, I find myself wondering how to ensure that I, you, we remember that people need us to uproot colonial histories, tell offensive secrets, and confront oppressive practices that dominant society loves to tuck into dark corners and nooks and crannies. On my quest to avoid the dark spaces of denial that seductively barter tranquility and ease for ignorance and complicity like Calafell

(2007), "I am scared to slip into these spaces of denial" (p.428). Wondering out loud to you, I must ask, how do we remember the significance of our privilege as practitioners, faculty, administrators, and students? How do we remember to be accountable and responsible toward those who have been forgotten? How do we remember that our complicity, albeit intentional or unintentional, with the tricky arts of domination (Scott, 1990) sustains subjugation? Selfishly, I return to the academy and my personal and always political concerns about how I can effectively engage activism, teach, and conduct research in a way that respects and cares for the souls of my students (hooks, 1994) and those who share their lives with me. I have felt the power housed within the combined knowledges and strengths of the lettered and unlettered (Collins, 2000) and Collins (2000) prompts me to defy the pretentious nature of the academy by seeking guidance and conversation from those who are often forgotten. Propelling me further hooks (2000b) calls for us to move our work beyond the ivory tower She calls for academic scholars to recognize that accessibility does not sacrifice complexity but rather can create more spaces to capitalize on the powerful contributions of research. Surrounded by the murky waters of uncertainty in terms of how to navigate and fulfill their impassioned appeals to my conscious, I resolve to aspire, as I imagine many of us in the movement for social justice do, to be among the "cultural workers" eloquently described by Cornel West (1990) as:

...intellectual and political freedom fighters with partisan passion, international perspectives, and, thank God, a sense of humor to combat the ever-present absurdity that forever threatens our democratic and libertarian projects and dampens the fire that fuels our will to struggle. (p.519)

For me, emphasis on the word *aspire*. Engulfed by a wistful hope that we can in fact do better, I want to share Wendell Berry with you; he offers us accounting as a literal and

figurative means to render the costs of blatant disregard visible. He asks that we subtract our losses from our gains (Berry , 2000). In the context of domination, the outcome of this equation reflects only one possible answer: change. We must change to do better and doing so will require dedication, commitment, sacrifice, and discomfort. We will have to listen and pay attention even when we don't agree, can't grasp understanding, and furiously disagree. We will have to reckon with the ways we have hurt at the intersections and bear witness to those who have cried out when we have hurt them. We will have to learn to live, see, speak, and behave differently. When I think about our dire need for change, a simple phrase by critical race theory scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (2002) comes to mind, she says, "Necessity is the mother of all invention" (p.13).

In my lifetime, I cannot think of a conscious moment when the necessity for a creative means to move forward toward new realities has been greater . Returning to my musings flooded by the momentum of the inauguration, we have a President, one of few among many, who openly acknowledges *and* identifies with the costs of oppression. And although it is quite tempting to get lost in sheer amazement that the President of the wealthiest nation in the history of the world bears personal and professional witness to the cruelties of oppression, my amazement is marred by reality. Yes, Obama is a biracial Black man who was freely elected the President of the United States and yes that is astonishing; many believed they would never see the day in their lifetime. I too stood on the Washington Mall shaking my head from left to right in discombobulated disbelief with tears streaming down my freezing cold cheeks. However , stemming from the depths of my soul, I am anxious and terrified. I fear that we are too quick to set history aside. I fear that we are too quick to lose sight of the dismal realities that most people continue to endure. I fear that "business as usual" will continue with marginalized communities being trampled on, pushed out, and forgotten by folks with power and each other . I fear that across multiple identity groups that we do not understand that

he is *I man with I administration* haunted by the footprints of a nation that has rejected most and accepted only an elite few . I fear that only so much can be done in *4 years*. I am anxious and terrified and yet met with a sense of urgency to believe that we can all do our part to get somewhere that is closer to something better by bringing critical consciousness to the forefront, unmasking the false appeals of domination, and doing more with our privilege. In writing to you, I think I discovered the most profound sentiment that I have to offer, which certainly isn't all that profound:

We have come far , but we must go further.

And we must be mindful of how we celebrate steps taken in the direction of progressive social transformation. In 1963 James Baldwin wrote to his nephew , "You know, and I know , that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one hundred years to soon" (p. 22). Delgado (2006) heightens Baldwin's (1963) caution when he identifies celebration as "...the first step to complacency" (p. 56); he reminds us how often celebration has deterred continued struggle by masking the ominous underbelly of the status quo that has yet to be sufficiently exposed. To be clear, I believe in celebrating the individual and collective hard work, strengths, and triumphs of the social justice movements happening around the globe. I want to join hands and raise them above our heads while tears of joy tumble down our cheeks too quick and carefree for Kleenex to catch. However, I need to ask for us to cling to the realities of the oppressed, even those we don't understand or can't imagine, when the waves of amazement, astonishment, and delight crash at the shores of our efforts as they did when the first man of color was elected President of the United States. We must celebrate and remember accountability, responsibility, and the need for actual change in the everyday lives of those who hurt deeply in ways that are too terrifying to envision. To be overcome by our victories, large and small, is to risk critical consciousness which is not by any means expendable. For myself, and I imagine you as well, this will mean navigating

the tension between the highs of triumph and the lows of exhaustion, tempering our progressive egos with constant reality checks, and addressing the omnipresent tension between our privileged and marginalized identities. Through the embrace of narrative and the beauty of the written word, I have arrived to the momentary end of my letter to you. From a space of hopeful humility, I ask that you remember my invitation.

I want you to see me and I want you to write back so that I can see you.

I want you to feel me and I want you to write back so that I can feel you.

I want you to shout, shriek, yell, and cry, never to be silenced while submerged in the pride and pain of being human, until I press the pause button on the racing pace of life to stop and simply listen to you—so that I can know you and you can know me.

In mindful celebration,

[AUTHOR]

P.S. Please bear in mind that since you had the time, energy, ability, and access to scholarly publications that permitted you to read this letter that you embody a position of privilege and as such I would argue have the social responsibility to move into critical dialogue with what you enjoyed and detested.

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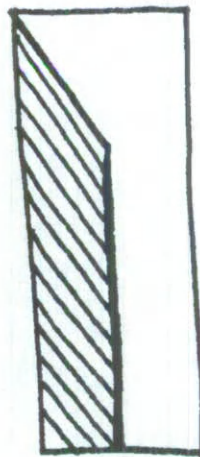
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DEVELOPING AN AWARENESS OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

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Understanding what it means to be white requires a reshaping of one's worldview; a willingness to challenge oneself and others to disrupt the status quo of a privilege that oppresses. The journey to an awareness of white privilege is messy, imperfect, disconcerting, and lifelong. The awareness cannot stand alone; it must lead to action. It involves speaking out to break the silences that perpetuate racism and listening to painful stories of people from communities of color without offering up "perfectly logical explanations" to dismiss their experiences. The voices of the marginalized and oppressed call us forth to create racial justice.

I Am White

I am white. That statement encompasses worlds of meaning about which I have been ignorant most of my life.

I know now that I have accumulated immense amounts of power and privilege simply because of the color of my skin. Socially embedded in my white skin is a deeply layered assurance that I am worthy and competent and better than those who are not white. That assurance has been affirmed in my schooling, the media, my religion, my family, my work, and my government. No one ever had to say out loud to me "*You are worthy because you are white.*" It is a part of the air I have breathed every day. It is what I have learned is at the core of who I am.

Orbiting the core are the privileges I have as a woman who is able-bodied, heterosexual, Christian, highly educated, and upper middle class. Disrupting the orbit is my marginalized identity of being a woman. My advancing age has also begun to change how I am treated by others. All the privileges I have had in my life have not protected me from repeated sexual harassment or the horrors of domestic violence. They have not stopped the appearance of a cloak of invisibility that covers me as I become an elder in our culture. There is a cumbersome dance among my identities, the roles which I inhabit in the world, and how I try to understand it all.

I am an ordained minister belonging to a religious denomination with a long history of being involved in social justice and yet I abhor how the Christian church as an institution has used its dominance in ways that marginalize

and harm others. As a woman in a misogynist culture, I have long simmering resentments against white men who have tried to keep me silent and mold me into subservient roles. As the mother of two white sons, I recognize they have been socialized into roles not always of their making. I have the benefit of multiple years of leadership experience in the corporate world and higher education in the United States. I also understand that organizational cultures mirror and reinforce the culture at large which means they are infused with whiteness and the injustice that occurs because of that. It is painful to realize that in all those years of leadership experience, I had never considered the question of my own race and how it affected others. It was only a couple of years ago that I began to understand the depth of the impact of whiteness.

I was at a social justice institute with a caucus of white student affairs administrators and staff as the facilitator asked us, "*What does it mean to be white?*" The circle was silent for some time; no one knew what to say. It was a question we hadn't asked ourselves even though many of us considered ourselves social justice educators. As Rothenberg (2005) noted, whites when asked to reflect on when and how they learned about their race draw a blank. She explained:

"Many cannot remember a time when they first 'noticed' that they were white because whiteness was, for them, unremarkable. It was always everywhere. They

learned to remark on 'difference' by noticing who was not like them. From an early age, race, for white people, is about everyone else." (p. 2)

The *about everyone else* dynamic has permeated academia. "For decades, the gaze of white academia has been trained on those defined as 'other,' whether using the terminology of race or ethnicity" (Garner 2007, p. 5). I have participated in that gaze and evaluated the differences of the *other* on a scale normalized to whiteness. I took diversity trainings so I'd learn what "they" were like. I congratulated myself on gaining the knowledge that people who were Asian, Hispanic, African-American—those who were *other*—all thought and acted in *this* way as if the individuality of group members was nonexistent. The arrogance of it all still shocks me. Never would it occur to me to classify all white people in the same way but, then, never did it occur to me to think that I had a race or might be considered as *other* by others.

We were at the social justice institute because we wanted to better understand racism. I learned that our ignorance about whiteness is what we need to better understand. Thus began a journey that was not linear, was not comfortable and was not neatly contained.

Let the Water Flow: Developing an Awareness of Whiteness

I live in Seattle; a city that knows rain but knows it in mostly contained ways. One winter a deluge of rain, accompanied by rampant winds, created a furious flowing into unexpected places like business parks and city neighborhoods wreaking havoc along the way. Things moored became afloat, attempts to hold the water back with sandbags were futile, creeks that were places to cool your feet became rushing torrents of danger foundations slipped, sinkholes opened up and roads fell away.

To become fully engaged in antiracist work as a white person, I've had to open myself to the dissolution of the contained ways

I've looked at life. I've needed to become unmoored with the rushing in of awareness that dislodges the foundations I've built. The roads I've previously walked on are no longer the ones I want to take and yet, I'm still in the midst of trying to make sense of the unexpected impact wrought by the flood, so the path ahead is not clear. I recognize that staying in and sorting through the messiness of this is a critical part of the work. All too often I get weary and want to simply move to another place. Then I remind myself of how I have the privilege to do that and that very fact is why it's so important that I don't move away. It is necessary to live in that place of discomfort and shifting boundaries.

Like Seattle knowing rain in contained ways, my awareness of racism has been primarily limited to tidy envelopes of knowledge that led me to feel compassionate about what "others" suffered. I kept myself "dry" in the midst of daily downpours of racism by individuals, institutions, and our culture. The reality is that I was disconnected from the flowing tears of those who face struggle simply because of the color of their skin.

Those tears have somehow seeped into my heart forcing it open in unexpected ways. I cry more now, having never been a person who comes to tears easily. There is less of a boundary up when I hear painful stories and I weep unexpectedly. There's less distance between the witnessing of racism and the impact on my heart, allowing me to more quickly speak up and risk saying what might possibly open up someone else's heart. It's not always a gentle insertion. Sometimes it requires me to be like a rushing torrent that again and again challenges injustice even as people try to sandbag me.

I say let the foundations be shaken and the roads be rearranged. Let the water flow.

Feeling Afraid Versus Feeling Safe

I wrote a reflection piece on white privilege and ended it with an Audre Lorde quote. "I'd like to know more about how you feel about the quote with which you ended your reflection," said a friend. She was challenging me to more deeply explore the anxiety that was beginning to surface as I

began to engage in antiracist work. The quote was:

"When I dare to be powerful - to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid" (Lorde, 1997, p. 13).

How I feel is afraid and inadequate. I feel overwhelmed and doubtful about what difference I can make as one person. I'm concerned I might cause more harm than good. I worry about doing anti-racist work in the "right" way knowing that my ignorance as a white person will continue to offend others who have been insulted and harmed by racist attitudes and actions all of their lives. I understand that I will continue to be racist.

How I'd like to feel is safe and protected from those fears. Because safe is generally what I know on a day-to-day basis. Because safe is what I expect on a day-to-day basis. My expectation of daily safeness highlights the privilege I constantly experience that often differs from the experiences of people of color

This became clear to me at an institute on racism. Split into racial caucuses, we developed group guidelines for how we would do our work together. Our white group came up with an extensive bulleted list of how we would communicate and work with each other. The people of color group had a short list: speak the truth, risk, don't hold back. It wasn't until later in the workshop that we white participants understood that our very complex list was designed to keep us safe from any challenge or pain that would take us outside our comfort zones.

The people of color were curious about our definition of safe. It didn't take much conversation for the whites to recognize that our ideas and experiences about being safe differed dramatically from many of their experiences. We realized that we never had to worry about being stopped by police because of the color of our skin. We had no history of suspecting store staff of following or harassing us because of our race. We didn't have to be concerned that our race would impact our ability to secure financial resources. We never

had to think about our children being vulnerable simply because of the color of their skin. We didn't get stopped at airport security checks.

Now, when I find myself thinking about creating a safe environment, I ask questions about what that means, for whom am I making it safe and why. When I enter into a discussion about racism, I'm more realistic in acknowledging that speaking the truth is risky behavior and I likely won't feel safe.

I was disturbed when a tenured white professor from a higher education counseling program spoke during a symposium on race about how he hired faculty. After lamenting the difficulty of finding people of color to fill positions, he acknowledged that the reality is he has one primary goal in mind when he does hiring: "More than age, ethnicity, race, and gender, I look for someone who is going to ensure the classroom is a safe environment." I don't know if he heard the collective gasp in the room or not. I felt as if I had been hit in the gut as I interpreted his statement to mean that anyone, whose presence caused discomfort in the classroom, whether because of the color of their skin, their gender, their age or what they said, would not be welcome in his teaching environment. I wondered how safe this white man's colleagues of color felt in that moment. I wondered what message the students were learning about being safe.

I've recognized a distinction that has caused me to redefine "safe" as I do this work. The truth is I will remain safe in fundamental ways, with my basic needs met, in spite of what I say or do because that is what my whiteness guarantees me in this culture. Whiteness has given me opportunities in education, job opportunities, and financial resources that were not available to many others because their skin was not white. Those opportunities have given me a secure foundation which will sustain me even if trials come my way. As I write these words, I experience a sense of sorrow that others cannot write the same words about themselves. All people are entitled to feel safe in this way.

I understand I will not be safe from my fears and doubts and the possibilities of failure while doing antiracist work. Friends and family



may think differently of me, colleagues may make judgments, angry words might hurt my feelings and actions by others may temporarily force me off track. But, I have whole cultural and institutional systems that will ensure I remain privileged because it is the nature of those systems to maintain the status quo. It is within those systems that, as a white person, I experience daily the benefits of the color of my skin being white.

The Bible says that to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). I take this as a prophetic call, particularly to those of us who are white, to become partners with all who strive daily to create racial equity. We are given power by the system. We have a choice about how and for what we use that power.

I've decided it is okay to feel afraid. Antiracism is big work with many critical challenges inherent within it. What is not okay is to retreat back into my safe place while others are suffering. There are occasionally days where I stop long enough to be quiet for a bit. It is at those times that I hear more clearly the unceasing echoes of the voices of those who are oppressed. Their stories surround me clamoring for a response. As the call to respond grows within me, there is very little room left to be afraid. I respond imperfectly in spite of the fear. To remain silent perpetuates injustice and that frightens me the most.

"When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak." Audre Lorde (1978)

Learning to Speak

There are signs I've learned to acknowledge that are telling me "it is better to speak." In the midst of a conversation, when my stomach flutters begin and the heart palpitations increase, I know that something wrong is occurring and needs to be addressed. While my mind races to create perfectly logical explanations to excuse what has just occurred or been said, my body wisdom insists that I speak and respond to the uneasiness I feel without rationalizing it away. One example of

this occurred in a weekly staff meeting of administrators on my university campus.

A person made a comment I interpreted as biased and hurtful to people of a particular social identity; several of my colleagues who were present claimed that identity. There was a tense silence after he spoke. The stomach fluttering started and accelerated as I looked around at the faces in the group. I did not know what to say. I knew I had to say something. "Wow, it's really hard for me to hear that," came stumbling out of my mouth. I didn't know what would come next. The next few words spoken were less important. What *was* important was to interrupt the stand his words had taken in the room that reflected the privilege out of which he lived and not the oppression which many of my colleagues faced daily. Letting the comment pass unchallenged would perpetuate the tendency to let discomfort and fear silence a response. It is better to speak and stir up the pot that wants to stay stagnant in a status quo of privilege.

After the meeting, two things happened. Several colleagues later expressed their gratitude for me challenging the comment which they experienced as discriminatory and hurtful. I made an appointment to meet with the person who made the comment to ask questions about why he said what he did, and we had a stimulating discussion on the issue.

One thing I learned from this is that my most authentic contribution in such situations is often my own emotional experience of it. This keeps me from falling into the trap of making possibly erroneous assumptions about what the speaker actually meant and leaves the possibility for dialogue more open. My study of emotional intelligence has greatly increased my capacity to recognize, claim, and name what I am experiencing in the moment and I can respond with more integrity.

The most important thing I learned from this, and other similar experiences, is how important it is for me to utilize my privileged positions to speak out as the ramifications of such actions for me are not even close to what often exists for people of color. No one has ever called me an angry white woman or said that I speak for all white people. No one has ever blamed my behavior or words on the color

of my skin. It is because of such privilege that I must speak.

So, I stumble into speech unsure of whether it will be welcomed, heard, or understood, but trusting that it is often better to speak than remain silent. Conversely I have also learned that there are times where remaining silent and listening with an open heart is critical.

Learning to Listen and Believe

I remember the day the non-traditional aged student of color came to my office to talk. She told of classroom and general campus life experiences where she felt shut out, shut down and dismissed as a woman of color. This was the first of many discussions we had. It's difficult to admit how many *logical* explanations for her experiences were being created in my mind as she shared her stories; it was tempting to speak those explanations to stop the flow of disheartening stories. I didn't want to acknowledge this kind of behavior was happening on the campus of a university steeped in values of justice and proud of its diverse student body. I wanted to believe she was an angry black woman blowing things out of proportion because that was what the whiteness curriculum of life had taught me to believe. Something kept me silent and held an open space inside that, little by little, let in more of the stories of pain. I then talked with other students and staff of color. I heard similar stories. I was resistant. I was sad. I didn't know immediately that the most important thing I could do was to feel the pain connected to such experiences; feel it deep down in my core so that I would never again let easy rationalizations crowd out the grief of what it was like for a person of color living in a racist culture.

One of the legacies of whiteness I experience is an illusion that I can fix most anything and control situations if I just try hard enough. My immediate response to stories of pain is to move past them and focus on making it better. That can be a trap. Staying with the pain of stories of racism can teach me in ways that facts and theories cannot.

Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004) advocate for the development of multicultural

awareness, knowledge, and skills as an incremental process for gaining multicultural competency that can then lead to effective action. I try not to skip those important first steps of developing an in-depth awareness and a grounded knowledge of the realities of racism before moving to developing skills that will lead me to action.

At the same time, I know what it is to get caught with my new awareness of whiteness in a whirlpool of swirling blame and guilt that circles endlessly and prevents me from making true progress towards change. Staying in such a whirlpool can itself be an act of privilege that provides a convenient, albeit often painful, excuse from taking those actions necessary to create racial justice.

Once again, the cumbersome dance presents itself. When to speak, when to stay silent. When to feel the pain, when to push through it to action. The dance requires partners. Doing this work is not a solitary venture. We need to be allies for each other, offering both encouragement and challenge as we strive to create a more just and humane world.

Working for Justice

Understanding my privilege and its impact on others is a lifelong journey on behalf of justice. I know that how I engage in that journey has ramifications for the others around me whether they are the students I see on a daily basis, my colleagues, my family or strangers I meet. Each encounter has the possibility of being a learning moment if I am alert to how privilege plays out on a daily basis. Each moment also has the capacity to cause harm to others because of my ignorance.

To reduce that ignorance, I continue to educate myself to be aware and understand the individual, cultural, and institutional manifestations of whiteness. I am guided by the lessons I have learned thus far.

I know the importance of developing a critical consciousness with which I examine daily how my privilege has influenced my behavior and the behavior of others towards me. I've learned that perhaps the best education I can hope to offer to others about issues of

privilege is the modeling of my own imperfect but persistent attempt to work for racial justice.

I know that learning about racism and whiteness is my own responsibility and not something that people of color have responsibility for teaching me. White people need to do their own work in these areas while ensuring they are not insulated from the experiences of people of color I take seriously the advice from my colleagues in the people of color caucus at the social justice institute: speak the truth, risk, don't hold back. I know that silence is a powerful tool in maintaining privilege and racism, so I push myself to break those silences.

I have experienced the power of stories to change people's perceptions in ways that litany of facts often cannot. I am willing to be vulnerable in sharing my own stories of imperfection and longing and know the deep rewards of listening attentively to the stories of others. I remember that some of the most powerful stories are told through music and poetry and other forms of art.

I keep in mind that contemplation of all of these things without action is an empty promise and that action without contemplation is a fool's path and a dangerous one for its impact on others. The journey is difficult and so the developing of allies along the way is crucial. We can be lenses for each other in those places we cannot yet see for ourselves.

The paths we take towards creating racial justice will be as different as the people we are and the roles we play. Yet, there are possibilities for convergence as awareness and action grows in multiple disciplines and professions. Such convergence has the power to create real change. It is that awareness that gives me hope, a vital quality in the struggles for justice.

Holly Near, a singer and songwriter activist, wrote a song called *I Am Willing* that captures the commitment to work for justice. I sing these words to myself when I get weary or discouraged:

*I am open, I am willing.
To be hopeless, would be so strange.
It dishonors those who go before us,
so lift me up to the light of change.*

There is something about knowing that I am part of a much larger community of people working for change that inspires me to continue the journey. The voices of the marginalized and oppressed, crying out for liberation, pull me forward.

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WHITE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN A MULTICULTURAL AGE

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In an era of increased multicultural awareness and competence, student affairs administrators and other helping professionals are tasked with developing programs and centers that promote inclusiveness and the understanding of self and others. For White professionals in student affairs administration, an understanding of personal development is essential to working effectively with students and colleagues from other cultural groups. This narrative demonstrates a model of self-exploration and application of a racial identity development model in an effort to enhance student affairs professionals' multicultural competence.

As my classmates' responses to the instructor's question flood the computer screen during an on-line course, up popped a "private" message from my instructor, "Maybe you have not reached the next developmental stage of the model yet?" That private message—red, bold, and vividly etched in my mind—was a thunderbolt to my very soul. Could it be possible? I read the message several times, then replied, "Wow, I think you are right. Maybe I haven't." My instructor responded, "Let's talk."

That private message was a turning point in my life. Even though I completed the readings for class, it was at that moment that I became aware of the fact that I was White, a member of a majority group and thus privileged within society; and as a result of my whiteness, that I was often perceived as an oppressor. The emotion was raw, drowning my heart like a torrential rain. The realization that I was a participant in people's suppression and oppression because of privilege crushed me. I wanted to crawl into a hole and die; not because of embarrassment, but because of shame. I viewed White society as very cruel and I did not want any part of it. It was at that moment that I decided to make a change, but a change for whom – for others, for me, or both? What was it that I wanted to change: my comfort, or the comfort of others? As an educator, how will such change affect my work? How can I make a difference? Will I make a difference?

In an era of increasing multicultural awareness and competence, student affairs administrators and other helping professionals

are tasked with developing programs and centers that promote inclusiveness and the understanding of self and others. For White professionals, an understanding of personal development is essential to working effectively with students and colleagues from other cultural groups. Using personal narrative as a method of inquiry, I will explore who I am and discuss my thoughts, motivations, and assumptions related to my White identity development and how it affects my work. Everyone has ideologies that can be difficult to acknowledge. I hope to instill a sense of willingness and urgency for individuals to embrace the opportunity to acknowledge their differences and embark upon their own journey by utilizing the tools developed by Helms (1984, 1990a).

Over the years, research has focused primarily on identity development of people of color, particularly on Black people. The most widely utilized theoretical model has been the Cross (1971) Model of Psychological Nigrescence. A shift in White identity typology from that of a purely psychological health focus to also including attitude development began in the eighties (Helms, 1990a) when Helms (1984) developed a model of White identity development (later revised in 1990). Ponterotto (1988, as cited in Tokar and Swanson, 1991) further suggested that it was "important to understand racial identity development levels of cross-cultural counselors, who are often White" (p. 296). While a substantial amount of research on White racial identity development has been done in the counseling field, there has been

minimal research related to the field of student affairs.

In an effort to examine the level of my own White identity development and to answer the questions that surfaced for me, I embarked on an in-depth study of Helms's White Racial Identity Development Model and an application of the model to myself.

Helms White Identity Development Theory

The most widely cited and utilized model of White identity development is that proposed by Janet Helms. Helms' (1990a) model was initially identified as a linear stage-based model; however, she discovered through further research that an individual may experience one or many of the statuses at the same time. In other words, each status can be present but at differing levels or times.

Racial identity, according to Helms (1990a), refers to the perception an individual develops with regard to his or her identification and recognition with a particular racial heritage or group. The context in which an individual attributes his or her heritage will determine the ability to adjust positively to racial identity development. Helms further states that, "White racial identity theories attempt to explain the various ways in which Whites can identify (or not identify) with other Whites and/or evolve or avoid evolving a nonoppressive White identity" (p. 5). White identity development, then, touches upon individual value systems, ideologies, reference groups, affiliations, commitments, and personal awareness as it relates to feelings and perceptions of those of another race.

Because racism plays a role in White identity development, one must have a sense of what racism is as well as recognition that racism exists. Three types of racism were identified by Jones (as cited in Helms, 1990a). They are:

(a) individual, that is, personal attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors designed to convince oneself of the superiority of Whites and the inferiority of non-White racial groups;

(b) institutional, meaning social policies, laws, and regulations whose purpose is to

maintain the economic and social advantages of Whites over non-Whites; and

(c) cultural, that is, social beliefs and customs that promote the assumption that the products of White culture (e.g., language, traditions, appearance) are superior to those of non-White cultures (p. 49).

Helms (1990a) indicates that in order for a positive and healthy White identity to develop, individuals need to overcome, at a minimum, one of these identified types of racism. This can be achieved by "accept[ing] [one's] own Whiteness, the cultural implications of being White, and defin[ing] a view of self as a racial being that does not depend on the perceived superiority of one racial group over another" (p. 49). To achieve such a White identity, one needs to understand the process of White identity development.

The Model. Helms's (1990a) White Identity Development model is composed of two phases and six statuses. The first phase is the abandonment of racism and includes the three statuses of contact, disintegration, and reintegration. The second phase is the defining of a positive White identity and includes the statuses of pseudo-independence, immersion/emersion, and autonomy. The model indicates that development takes place in statuses versus stages because as the individual works through racial identity development, statuses can occur simultaneously, only once, several times, not at all, or the individual may remain in a status for the duration of the individual's life.

Contact. The contact status is essentially color-blindness. In this status the individual "is oblivious to her or his own racial characteristics and attempts to pretend that others have none. Naiveté and 'accidental' insensitivity often characterize the person in this [status]" (Helms, 1990b, p. 10). At this status, White individuals "choose to be oblivious to race" (Helms, 1990a, p. 54). There is minimal awareness and the individual only interacts with people of color when it is necessary, such as at work or in minimally sought out social settings. There are two types of awareness related to the contact status – vicarious and

direct. Vicarious awareness refers to the ways in which individuals gain such awareness – through the media, family or friends. Direct awareness refers to how a White individual acts, or reacts, with or toward a person of color. Helms (1990a) further indicates that the duration of the contact status is determined by the types of interactions and experiences and the type of awareness related to such experiences. For example, if the experience is influenced more with vicarious awareness rather than direct awareness, it is likely that the individual will remain in the contact status for an extended period of time. The White individual moves to the disintegration status when her or his awareness of social interaction and social intolerance of racial peer pressure is recognized as inappropriate or unjust.

Disintegration. This status occurs when the White individual becomes consciously aware that she or he is White, which results in a flood of moral dilemmas and personal conflict. It is in this status that the White individual realizes that people of color and White individuals are not perceived as equal; that what one had been taught as a youngster is not true, and that how the White individual chooses to respond may cause incongruence with self and personality, not to mention the effect of the White individual's status in society.

In the disintegration status, the White individual experiences many feelings – guilt, anxiety, helplessness, even depression. In Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (as cited in Helms, 1990a), she or he identifies such feelings as dissonance and indicates that "when dissonance is present, a person will not only attempt to reduce it, but will also take steps to avoid situations and information that are likely to increase it" (p. 59). Hence, this indicates that an individual can reduce such dissonance by changing their behavior or the environment, and develop new beliefs as one works through the disintegration status.

Reintegration. As the White individual's conscious awareness is more clearly defined with regard to her or his White identity, reintegration occurs. At this status, the White

individual "accepts the belief in White racial superiority and Black inferiority and residual feelings of guilt and anxiety are transformed into fear and anger toward Black people" (Helms, 1990a, p. 60). In addition, the White individual begins to develop either a passive or active expression when interacting with people of color. Passive expression refers to the deliberate removal from or avoidance of the environment for which one may encounter people of color. Active expression would include the inferior treatment of people of color and, in some cases, includes violence toward a minority group in an effort to protect the White individual's privilege. In this status, the "person resolves her or his racial moral dilemmas by trying to re-establish a status quo in which Whites are superior and entitled to privilege and Blacks are inferior and entitled to disadvantage" (Helms, 1990b, p. 11). Helms (1990a) further indicates that the White individual could remain in this status throughout the duration of one's life, especially if the individual chooses a passive expression of superiority. For the individual to move from the reintegration status to another status, a personally jarring or traumatic event must occur that challenges the racial identity of the White individual.

Pseudo-independent. The pseudo-independent status is "characterized by an intellectualized awareness of one's own race as well as societal racial issues. However the [individual] still [believes] that 'race' and 'racism' are best understood and explained by 'intelligent non-White' people" (Helms, 1990b, p. 11). The White individual is flooded with the realization of Whiteness and the injustices that accompany this status more strongly than at any other time in the model. Here, they "actively question the proposition that Blacks are innately inferior to Whites;" and "begin to acknowledge the responsibility of Whites for racism and to see how he or she wittingly and unwittingly perpetuates racism" (Helms, 1990a, p. 61). This status marks the beginning of the positive White identity development. The White individual is drawn to personal rewards that are non-racist such as self-esteem.

Immersion/emersion. In the immersion/emersion status, the White individual comes face to face with the stereotypes, myths, and mores that are present in their identity. It is in this status that the White individual enters into a deep conversation with self and asks what it means to be White (Helms, 1990a). The White individual in this status finds her or him self riding an emotional roller coaster as feelings that may have been suppressed for some time surface and the individual works through the negative responses of their cognitive restructuring and begins to experience positive change. In the immersion/emersion status, the White individual experiencing positive change finds that there is a reservoir of energy from which to draw as the individual begins to "tackle racism and oppression in its various forms" (p. 62).

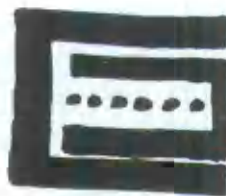
Autonomy. By the time the White individual reaches autonomy status, the individual has already begun to demonstrate their new anti-racist White identity. No longer does the individual seek to oppress, denigrate, or threaten individuals of other races, but rather, the individual seeks out opportunities to learn about the various cultural groups and begins to identify other areas of oppression, be it heterosexism, sexism, ageism, or other systems of marginalization. At this status, the individual finds her or him self at "racial self-actualization or transcendence" or "in an ongoing process" (Helms, 1990a, p. 66) of development. Thus begins the White individual's process of change, growth, and renewal in seeking a positive White racial identity.

Method

The primary method of inquiry utilized for looking into my own White identity development was critical self-reflection of past and present life events as well as daily journaling for a two-month period and personal application of the Helms' (1990a) White Racial Identity Development Model. I utilized both the Helms' (1990a) White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) and the Workshop Activity on Self-Assessing White Racial Identity Scale worksheets to identify my initial

White racial identity status and the attitudes that I needed to address to develop a more positive White identity. Helms' WRIAS was developed to measure the attitudes of Black and White individuals as it relates to their relationship to each other. While racial identity is broader than just being Black or White, for the purposes of this paper I am using Helms' model to explore my own identity development. It is in the context of Helms' model for which I am speaking when referring to Black individuals.

Additionally, I developed worksheets that enabled me to note my personal thoughts and recollections of how or when I worked through each of the statuses. These worksheets allowed me to better analyze the journal entries, as they were categorized by statuses.



Results

Tatum (1997) indicates that one's identity is influenced by family characteristics, individuality, history, and social and political influences. How individuals are perceived by members of society is often based upon race, and how individuals respond to society is based upon their current racial identity. In an effort to understand my own identity, I examined where I grew up, what ideologies formed during my development, who I was, and who I wanted to be.

I was raised in a blue-collar, Catholic, White, Irish, Danish, and Dutch, alcoholic, divorced, and (in my opinion) dysfunctional family. Many hot Saturday afternoons were spent sitting in the car in the parking lot of a bar with my two sisters and two brothers waiting for my father to come out. My father grew up in New York and joined the Navy when he was 18 years old in an effort to break away from his domineering father. While in California, he met my mother. After a two-year courtship, they married. Over the course of seven years they had five children, of which I am the oldest. I was born in 1960. I initially

experienced a family where dad worked and mom stayed home with the children. My mother went to work when I was 12, and soon after my parents divorced.

The Garbage Men

My earliest experience with racism was related to degradation and segregation. When I was six years old my family moved from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas. As my family settled into our new house, I heard a loud rumbling noise in the distance. As the sound got closer, I noticed that it was a garbage truck. I watched as the truck neared my house and saw two men in orange jump suits behind the truck. As the truck would move forward, the men in the orange jump suits would come out from behind the truck, pick up a garbage can, dump the garbage into the truck, put the garbage can back, and then step onto the back of the truck. Soon the garbage truck reached my house and I watched with great excitement as the garbage went into the truck. When the man who picked up my garbage can put it back on the curb, he saw me and waived a brown-gloved hand, smiled, and got back on the truck. I stood there mesmerized by what I saw I ran into my house and said to my mother "Garbage men sure do get dirty – he had dirt all over his face." My mother threw her head back in laughter and replied, "No Colleen, he is a Black man. It is his job to pick up the garbage." All the years I lived in that house, the men that picked up our garbage were Black, thus, I assumed only persons of color were garbage collectors.

My mother used the garbage man as a ploy to get my little brothers to behave. If they were misbehaving, she would say to them, "If you don't stop crying I am going to give you to the garbage man." As a result, every time my brothers would hear the garbage truck coming, they would run into the house, shut the door, and stand at the window waiting for the garbage truck to pass our house – terrified that the garbage man was going to take them away. As a youngster it was comical to me, and I would wait at the window with them and spur on their fears.

Growing up in Las Vegas, segregation was prevalent in the community I do not recall any

children of color in my neighborhood. I was told that Black people lived in North Las Vegas, not in our neighborhood. North Las Vegas – a mere five or six miles away from where I lived – could have been across the state and I would not have known otherwise.

1970s Sitcoms

Many nights during my childhood were spent watching television shows that were situation comedies featuring African Americans and issues of race such as *All in the Family*, *Sanford and Son*, and *The Jeffersons*. As my father howled with laughter at something Archie Bunker said, I stared at the television screen trying to figure out what was funny. What I got from Archie Bunker was that it was not a good idea to trust Black people or anyone different from us, because they would steal from you, rape your daughter or wife, and ruin the neighborhood. One day I asked my father why he liked to watch the show. He told me it was because Archie Bunker was just like his father Okay - so now I had an idea of what my grandfather was like, but I still did not understand why my father was laughing.

The first Black man I ever saw on television was the character of "George Jefferson" on *All in the Family*. During that episode, Archie went on a rampage about a Black family living next door to him and how now the neighborhood was going to go downhill. However, the theme song for *The Jeffersons* spoke volumes to me as a youngster. The lyrics indicated that this Black family was moving up in class status, that they could afford to live in a White neighborhood on the eastside, that they finally got a break in life, and were getting "a piece of the pie." I understood the class status and the moving to the eastside, but I did not understand the "piece of the pie" metaphor. I asked my father what it meant, and he told me that White people did not always want to share success with Black people. He said that White people try to stop Black people from getting ahead by keeping things from them, and that by getting "a piece of the pie," the *Jeffersons* finally broke through racial barriers and attained a higher socio-economic status.

Sanford and Son, which was set in a junk yard, reinforced for me the notion that all garbage men were Black. As a youngster, it provided me with a glimpse of what I thought being Black was like. Since many of the jokes in the show were about Black people, it impressed upon me as a youngster that it was okay to joke about race and that Black people did not mind.

Junior High School

While growing up in Las Vegas, I cannot remember any of my classmates in elementary school being people of color. My first face-to-face interaction with children from under-represented groups was when I entered seventh grade and junior high school. When I was in the sixth grade, the school districts instituted a Sixth Grade Center that would introduce and integrate Black and White sixth grade students with each other before they entered junior high school. The year before I entered junior high school, there were two riots at the junior high that generated horrible rumors of White female students being dragged by the hair down the halls by Black girls, and raped and beaten by Black boys. As a result of these rumors, I developed a fear of junior high school and of Black people. When it came time to enter junior high school, I told my mother that I was going to make sure that I made friends with some Black girls so that if there were any problems they would protect me – and I did. My mother never told me that thinking that way was bigoted or anti-racial.

Mother and daughter talks were rare when I was growing up, but there was always an underlying message: it was not acceptable to kiss, date, or marry a Black man. If we did, my mother would disown us. The only reason given was that White people just do not marry Black people.

Graduate School

I only recently became aware of the fact that because I am White, I am privileged within society. This realization took place in my Introduction to Identity Development graduate course during the Fall 2006 semester, and is the event I discussed at the beginning of this paper. As we reviewed the identity

development models of Cross' s Model of Psychological Nigrescence, Helms' Model of White Identity, and Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity, the instructor asked if we could remember in our lives where we were and what the circumstances were when we moved from one level of identity to the next. I stated that I believed that all people are individuals, and that I never considered color to be a deterrent as an adult. Other students were identifying specific events in their lives that clearly indicated transitions.

I was somewhat frustrated and felt a little out of place. I indicated that I was having a hard time coming up with any specific incident or issue that would identify my transition. To my surprise, my instructor informed me that maybe it was because I am just now starting the journey. While I have always known I was White, I did not know what it meant to be White and have innate power as part of a majority group. The realization that I am a participant in people's oppression merely because of privilege devastated me. As a result, I sought opportunities to learn about my Whiteness.

Family

As I was examining the development of my racial identity, I attempted to have conversations with family members regarding racial issues, segregation, superiority, and oppression. To my displeasure, they were not very receptive. Every attempt led to a disagreement between what I was sharing with them and what they perceived to be true. For example, we could agree that God created man in his image. However, no matter how often I had the conversation with my family regarding skin color and melanin, I could not get them to understand, nor have I been able to change their belief that Black people came into existence as a result of a curse on Cain when he killed Abel.

Many of my family members have expressed their displeasure in my pointing out that a racial joke or comment about a person of color, gay, lesbian, or Jewish person was inappropriate. They question my education and ask me what kind of "cult" I am getting into. About three years ago, my in-laws were considering purchasing a new home. They

found a very nice home, but were "concerned" about the neighborhood. They visited the neighborhood at different times of the day and sat in the car for several hours at a time in order to determine what kind of people lived nearby. They were sitting in their car around at 6:00 p.m. when a Hispanic family pulled into the driveway next door to the house they wanted to purchase. At about the same time, they noticed a Black man exiting his vehicle on the corner. That was all it took for them to make up their minds: they did not purchase the house. I challenged the basis of their decision, but my comments were not well received and there was no further discussion about it.

Dr. Janet Helms

While researching White identity development, I found the website of Dr. Janet Helms, the originator of the White Identity Development Model I had been studying and using to examine my own racial autobiography. I was very excited and immediately clicked on the link. As I watched the website load up, a photograph of a Black woman appeared and was identified as Dr. Janet Helms. I was taken aback and surprised to learn that Dr. Helms was Black. As I sat at my computer taking this in, I became angry. How could a Black individual think about telling a White individual about their racial development process? After the shock wore off, I asked myself why it surprised me. Initially, I was angry, guarded and suspicious of her motives. It never occurred to me that a person of color might have some insight into what a White individual would or could experience. As I continued to contemplate the matter, I realized that I had just been met with an awareness of my inaccurate racial beliefs.

Discussion

The application of the Helms' s White Identity Development model to my own White identity development further revealed that I was in the abandonment of racism phase for most of my life. It was not until that eventful afternoon when my instructor helped me to realize that I had just made a transition – I was 47 at the time I began my journey of

developing a positive White identity. When I learned that Dr. Janet Helms was a Black woman, however, I briefly reverted back to the reintegration status and struggled with the realization that I actually believed Whites were superior. I was overwhelmed by guilt and shame.

Many facets of society mold our identity development and how our identity is constructed differs from one individual to another. As one develops, what is experienced as an adolescent will "ripple throughout the lifespan" (Tatum, 1997, p. 20). The misconceptions of self can play out through one's life, dictating how one's life will be and how others are treated, thereby, stressing the need to understand one's own identity, biases, racial issues, and stereotypical mores.

Upon analysis, it is evident that vicarious awareness (*All in the Family*, *Sanford and Son*, *The Jeffersons*) shaped my ideology of Black people and fueled my fears, along with the explanations I received from my parents. Vague responses from adults were interpreted by a six year old, further contributing to my misconceptions of race as an adult. My direct awareness of how I treated and felt about people of color, particularly Blacks, demonstrated negative interactions and therefore reinforced the ideology of contact status.

The most revealing awareness that surfaced for me is that I have developed two identities: a personal and a professional identity. Helms (1990a) indicates that some individuals may find themselves experiencing the "ability to successfully 'split' her or his personality" (p. 58). I find it much easier to work through my White identity development on a professional level than on a personal level. In the professional setting, multicultural awareness and competence are embraced and my colleagues are willing and eager to discuss these matters. My personal White identity development has been harder to work through because my family is not as accepting of my developing new identity. I believe, however, that as I continue to develop my professional White identity, it will enhance my personal White identity and eventually the two will become one.

The application of the Helms' s White Identity Development Model helped me to find the answers to my initial questions. Why am I on this quest for change? Is it for personal satisfaction, for me to feel better because I am White? Am I trying to do all I can for change to make myself feel better? Why has it become so important to me to work with people of color and discuss issues of bias and indifference? What is my motivation? Will I make a difference?

Initially, it was to make myself feel better about being White and to explain the dissonance I experienced when I recognized that I was often perceived as an oppressor , and to somehow remove my regrets for all that White society imposed upon people of color. I started out on a quest to heal the pain I was experiencing and realized that the pain will never go away and that my journey will never end. I recognize that I need to continue to seek out every opportunity to conduct research, and attend conferences, programs and training about race, diversity , multiculturalism, and affirmative action. My journey, so far, has helped me to accept my own "isms" and to acknowledge that I have them. It has enhanced the realization that no minority individual or group deserves to be subjected to unjust behaviors and that I am a small part of the overall solution to end oppression, suppression, and degradation.

Conclusion

To become effective allies, student affairs administrators and other helping professionals must recognize that one must seek awareness and understanding regarding cultures and issues related to multicultural competence. Professionals need to take active steps toward individual identity development and understanding and become educated individuals for change. Yamato (1996) indicates that we must "work on racism for [our] own sake, not [the student's] sake" (as cited in Wall and Evans, 2000, p. 357). Only by knowing who we are as individuals can we effectively facilitate positive change.

This experience has made me a more culturally aware individual. As a result, I have developed more meaningful positive

relationships with my colleagues and students. I am also more aware of multicultural issues and will strive to develop programs that are more culturally inclusive and responsive. Most importantly, I am aware of my own limitations and what I need to work on as I continue my journey and strive to affect change.

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Call for Papers

PROMOTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

A SPECIAL ISSUE IN CELEBRATION OF THE LEGACY OF PROFESSOR JILLIAN JIMENEZ

Social justice may be defined as the fair distribution of goods, services, rights, and duties. The social expression and societal mechanism for distributing resources, opportunities, and obligations are made manifest through interdependent systems of policies and procedures. Mediated by values and preferences, policies as specific expressions of the public will affect and shape the overall quality of life in society, the circumstances of living, and the nature of intra-societal relations.

Historically, the profession of social work has adhered to philosophical, ethical, moral obligations, and practice principles that bind it to social and civic activism as a means of promoting a society where all have access to the requisites of freedom enumerated in the constitution. The profession's mantra and call to action continue to be anchored in the promotion of distributive justice.

In celebration of Professor Jimenez's scholarly and practice commitment to principles of social activism and advocacy as means of promoting social justice, narratives are invited that:

- Demonstrate the efficacy of strategies that promoted programmatic and organizational changes that facilitated distributive justice
- Depict the self-determined involvement of students, service recipients, or practitioners as change agents
- Provide illustrations of how social and civic engagement may change and actively contribute to the process of educating social workers
- Provide illustrations and practice principles that facilitate the modification of agency/organization policies and programs to affect a just distribution of resources and opportunities

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GROWING UP APPALACHIAN: MARGINALIZATION AND PRIVILEGE

Peggy Proudfoot McGuire, Ph.D., Salisbury University

The following narrative describes the cognitive and emotional processes experienced by the author as a child growing up in Appalachia in the 1960s and 70s. The author shares her personal experiences to illuminate the complexities of Appalachian life and culture, as well as the resilience of its citizens, particularly women. The processes that re-inscribe marginalization and privilege have shaped—and continue to influence—the author's identities as an ethnic minority, social worker, and educator. This narrative attempts to initiate authentic dialogue about "social culture" (Stewart & Bennett, 1991).

As I stand in front of students enrolled in my social work classes, I am constantly aware that the faces I see and the papers I read provide only a glimpse of the depth inherent in each learner. When classes commence, my students seem to give me their undivided attention. As we comb through the syllabus, I see that they are assessing me to determine how demanding or permissive I will be. They see an assistant professor of social work whom they've been told has spent the better part of a thirty year career as a practitioner and educator. They see in my teaching what my values and beliefs are with regard to the subject matter. What they don't see is the intersection of the historical marginalization of my Appalachian culture with my privileged identities, and how that complexity has shaped those values and beliefs.

Social Context

Appalachia has been in and out of the public eye over the years. The limelight has not, however, been generally favorable to Appalachia. The idea that this proud Appalachian ancestry and culture is considered by the larger society to be "underprivileged" is a difficult awareness to concede. As a member of this ethnic group, I have always understood that the larger society saw us as an anomaly. Natural geographic features and a unique history made us far different from those who were dwellers on the piedmonts and prairies. Our ancestors were rural by design; wanting freedom from the confines of societal rules, they made their

way to the area and lived off the land. Our area of the world was, until recently extremely difficult to transverse due to the rugged terrain and lack of suitable roads. We were a culture that was virtually cut off from the larger American society until the last part of the 20th Century. However, since life is not static, even topography can only keep the world from encroaching for a period of time. In our case, it lasted about 150 years.

In addition to devastating the Appalachian region, the Civil War also introduced "Yankees" to the area. Seeing the vast natural resources, the "Yankees" returned after the war as land developers and engaged our predominately Scots-Irish ancestors who did not like government and who believed that God preordained the circumstance of life. Weller (1965) describes the West Virginian's perceptions of government and bureaucracy, "[H]e has a certain fear of them, as if those who run them were out to get him or were interested only in doing things to their own advantage and at his expense" (p. 85). The combination of outsiders, anti-government sentiment, and predestination beliefs became a devastating recipe for many Appalachians. In their desire to be left alone, the mountaineers of the early and mid-1900s succumbed to the tactics of developers who threatened them with legal action if they did not turn over their land. Believing that they would be in trouble with the law, the mountaineers probably thought that God had ordained that these people arrive anyway, and found themselves at a loss.

Through this intimidation, these outsiders" cheated people out of their land and mineral rights; reaffirming my father's assertion that "they will take your land." The developers were shrewd and understood that the mountaineers were proud people who wanted to be in charge of their own society without intrusion. However, the developers needed laborers to work the coal mines and wanted to make sure that the local people would accept their meager terms of pay Smith (1983) indicated that developers made use of unsuspecting sociologists who wanted to study the Appalachian "ways" which were thought, at that time, to be comparable to those of the Middle Ages. The developers exploited these studies to stereotype and demean the people, with the goal of making them feel worthless. Once the people felt powerless, it was easy for the developers to have them work long hours for little pay. These outsiders had shattered the self worth of a very proud people in addition to taking their land, homes, and way of life.

Toynbee's Treatise

In high school, our history teacher told of an English historian named Arnold Toynbee (1935) who allegedly never spent any time in Appalachia but wrote an account of the types of people who lived in the region anyway. His description read in part:

"The Appalachian mountain people at this day are no better than barbarians. They are the American counterparts of the latter-day White barbarian of the Old World, the Rifis and Kurds and the Hairy Ainu; but, whereas these latter are believed survivors of an ancient barbarism, the Appalachians present the melancholy spectacle of a people who have acquired civilization and then lost it."

At the time, I did not know who the Rifi or AINU people were, but I assumed that they were people with whom one would not want to be associated. Nor did I, at the time, recognize the racism inherent in what was meant to be a shaming description of the Appalachian people.

With years of being socialized into believing in my inferiority, I ultimately become so overwhelmed with humiliation about my cultural background that I began to make fun of myself. I would begin discussions by excusing my lack of intelligence: "I don't really know for sure, 'cause I don't get out much" was a common phrase for me. As a people, we seemed to be so powerless. The Blacks challenged the horrible treatment that they had endured for centuries in this country, but Appalachians did not seem to complain or object. I became very aware that I was different from my urban counterparts and just wanted to fit in. However, that was difficult when I had been so isolated that even my language sounded antiquated and was often hard for those outside of our culture to even understand.

Life Training

In Appalachian culture, stories are a vehicle used to teach morals and values. They provide entertainment as well as lessons about consequences and responsibility, and how to lead a good life. Looking back, I realized that the themes of marginalization and privilege were a constant part of the conversation in our home as I grew up.

Mother

My mother often told stories about her childhood in the 1920s and 30s during the Great Depression in Scott's Run Coal Camp located near Morgantown, West Virginia. "We didn't know there was a depression; everybody was poor, so it was normal," she would say. My grandpa was a coal miner. He worked six 18-hour days per week, housed his family in "company accommodations," which were little more than shacks, and was paid in script (company minted money) that was redeemable only at the company store. Most of the script went to pay rent for the company

owned shack, with little left over to buy food at the company store. Mom told us about having only potatoes and fry bread to eat on any given day; as a result of her poor diet, she developed rickets, a disease that is associated with developing countries that do not have enough vitamin D in their diets. Mom's older sister died of meningitis; according to my mother, the death of children was a regular occurrence at the camp.

Mom also shared that First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt received word from a friend who had visited Scott's Run that, "Scotts Run was the worst place she had ever seen, with housing most Americans would not have considered fit for pigs." Mom said that after reading the letter, Mrs. Roosevelt came to see the camp for herself, and later told her husband about the dire conditions there. He was so appalled that soon thereafter plans were underway to help the poor coal miners and their families by creating the first *New Deal* community in Arthurdale, West Virginia.

My mother loved school and wanted to be a teacher. However, due to financial constraints, she was forced to quit school in the 8th grade to help her mother clean houses and wash shirts for the West Virginia University students. While my mother turned out to be a strong and resourceful person, education and money have always been difficult topics for her. The economic disparities and social injustices left my mother believing that her intellectual abilities were inadequate. When a parent learns these lessons, they are often conveyed to the children, leading to generation after generation of feelings of low self-worth and insecurity.

Father

My dad grew up as an only child in Randolph County. He owned a coal mine and was the proprietor of our general store. As a child, I was constantly told by my father that I was the recipient of a strong and proud heritage. My fifth great-grandfather, William Currence, was a Scottish renegade who was held prisoner by the British and shipped to this country as a slave. He became a scout, and a soldier in Lord Dunmore's War and in the Revolutionary War with England. In 1750, he

was charged by General Washington to build a fort as part of a line of defense against the British in what is present-day Mill Creek. William Currence laid the foundation for my early sense of cultural pride. As a child I walked by the house he built, where generations of my family were born. The town where I grew up was incorporated as Currence's Mill Creek—later shortened to Mill Creek—after the mill that my great-grandfather built. Land was inherited by the generations that followed William with the strict rule that it should be cherished by those to whom it was given. Most of my family obeyed the rule and stayed in the area.

As a child I would listen to my parents discuss many issues, most prominently the issue of labor unions. My dad's coal mine was small, employing about forty miners. It was a non-union mine, but he believed that he paid fair wages and suggested that all the miners seemed very happy to work for him. My dad would argue that if you treated people well there was no use for a union. My mother on the other hand, had endured the impoverishing consequences of non-unionism. While my mother agreed in part with my dad's ideas, she usually stood by the tenets of the United Mine Workers of America. She often reminded me about how privileged I was to live in our house and have the things that she never had.

Contemplating Life

After hearing the differences in my parents' stories, I began to wonder just where I fit in. In 1962, I was 7 years old. All of my needs were taken care of; I always had new clothes, good Christmases, and traveled with my family on summer vacations. I would think about my poor mother at my age: freezing nights, holes in her shoes, and very little food to eat. I enjoyed the advantages of a comfortable life because I was born into this particular family.

When I began to work in our general store as an 8 year old in 1963, I would consider how the lessons I learned from my mom applied to our customers. Most of them were coal miners or lumberjacks that came in after work, purchasing groceries on credit extended by my dad. The biggest day was Saturday when entire

families would shop. Though I was busy gathering groceries, running the cash register and boxing up goods, I always paid attention to their conversations. I began to understand how difficult life was for many people in our area, both financially and socially. Kerosene oil was purchased to heat and light homes as well as kill head lice. I found that many families experienced issues with alcoholism and violence. Many of the kids I went to school with could not afford hot lunches. Instead, they would have a sandwich wrapped up in wax paper, carried in a paper lunch bag. Day after day they would refold the wax paper, place it back in their paper bags, and take it home to be used again.

Feelings about My Privilege

Because I was aware that many in my community experienced great poverty and social turmoil, I felt ashamed of the things I had. Although I was socially aware at a young age, I did not understand why everyone did not have as much as I had. Granted, I was not rich in the context of the larger society, but I was well-to-do compared to most of my neighbors. The house I lived in had a furnace; we did not heat with kerosene or wood. We had an indoor bathroom, not an outhouse like most people in our community.

At 8 years old, the emotional and cognitive dissonance I experienced led me to make the decision that I would try to figure out how to *really* help my community. I did not fully comprehend the problems or their complexity but I vowed to learn what they were and find ways to intervene.

Television

Several years before I was born, my parents bought a television set. Television reception was difficult in our mountainous area. Reception on the two channels was fuzzy and would frequently go out when wind or snow knocked over the mountaintop antenna.

I noticed that we were very different from the people I watched on television. We certainly did not dress or talk like them, with the exception of shows like the *Beverly Hillbillies* and *The Real McCoy's*. Anytime I met someone from the "outside" they would

compare me to one of the characters on these shows. This used to infuriate me because I felt I was being made fun of and could not understand why people wanted to be mean. Television also highlighted my realization that women were expected to be subservient to men, in general and within Appalachian culture. This came as a complete surprise to me, because my mother and paternal grandmother were matriarchs who were respected by their husbands. Most women in my community were equal partners in the home; men and women usually split duties such as paying bills, home repairs, cooking, and cleaning. Traditionally, women cooked and cleaned and had responsibilities with the children such as church, school, and gardening. The men traditionally worked outside the home, did repairs, hunted, and fished. The role of "bill payer" in each home was a decision that couples made together.

During my childhood, a Presbyterian minister wrote a book about the behaviors and opinions of West Virginians. In it, he made the observation that middle class couples shared household duties such as laundry, whereas Appalachian couples did not share housework; that the wife was "an obedient slave" to her husband (Weller, 1965, p.75). During the same era, Bott (1957) noted that the relationship between a husband and wife in Appalachia was "segregated" in contrast to the "joint" relationships of middle class urban couples. She maintained that, "segregation results in a separation of tasks, friends, leisure-time pursuits, interests, and activities." Weller (1965) further commented about the views of middle class urban persons regarding Appalachian couples: "They (sic) find it difficult to accept what seems to them a total unconcern of husband and wife for one another." (p75). He continues by explaining that this pattern of uncomfortable communication between the sexes is very much in line with survival of the family. Because many husbands are killed at a young age in coal mining and other work-related accidents, it is imperative for the woman to maintain the household along with the extended family. Conversely, women often died in childbirth, forcing the men to maintain the

family. He theorized that what he interpreted as lack of emotional closeness was a psychological defense mechanism against grief from loss, and was one of the many contradictions of the Appalachian culture. He explained that although Appalachian families frequently chose to live close to their relatives for generations, they also established psychological barriers against their loved ones as a type of protection against being emotionally destroyed when/if they died.

I also learned from watching television that we handled our relationships differently from the larger society. Many couples on television shows would display affection in front of their children and even other people. They would hug, kiss, and hold hands in public. This was never the case in our house, or any of my friend's homes. This type of behavior was absolutely against norms of Appalachian culture.

The observations of Bott (1957) and Weller (1965) regarding the differences between the relationship dynamics of rural and urban couples held some truth, but failed to recognize the cultural norms that dictated the reticence of many Appalachians to publicly display deep emotions or physical affection. These interpretations of behavior are excellent examples of well-meaning onlookers failing to understand the complexities of the Appalachian's subjective cultural experience.

The War on Poverty

Appalachian women are generally considered to be the leaders of their families. As Weller (1965) noted in his study of Appalachian subjective culture, the ability of women to network and take on decision-making roles was often a necessity for survival of the family. When the coal mines and lumber mills shut down in the 1960s, I watched as family after family was forced to either move to Ohio or Michigan for work, or "go on the dole." This displacement of the man as the "bread winner" dealt a devastating blow to the people of my community. If they were forced to sign up for "relief" (prior to the changes in welfare regulations), the man had to move out of the home and leave his family in order for the woman to receive assistance.

To be able to deal with the loss of livelihood, the loss of their partners, and to provide for their families, women had to be strong and resourceful.

I turned 10 years old in the summer of 1965. I was still working in our general store when a photographer came in to talk about the War on Poverty and ask about people in our town. I had a vague idea of what he meant, because I had watched President Kennedy declare that "War" on the news, after which we were inundated with VISTA workers from the Northeast to teach us how to plant gardens. Apparently, the photographer had heard that our community was in dire straits and wanted to show the world (once again) just how bad things were by taking pictures. He found a local family who agreed to be in the magazine. I'm not sure if they were offered money, but in December 1965, sandwiched between the cover article titled "The Mad New World of Julie Andrews" and "Jews and Christmas" was "Christmas in Appalachia," including ten pictures of that family. Needless to say, the article reinforced painful stereotypes.

Later as a college student, I began to see how these strange observations by the media had affected our community and state. I read that President Johnson sponsored the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to continue the War on Poverty, and that the Appalachian Regional Commission was created as a funding source to assist counties in creating organizations in twelve geographical locations in Appalachia, including ours. The Commission was charged with helping the needy, who Dolgoff and Feldstein (1984) indicated were most often considered to have low intelligence, emotional problems, and the need for rehabilitative services. These views of the people of Appalachia were held by the policy makers who voted to fund the "War." The Commission was supposed to provide organizational services by funding health, housing, and education initiatives. Dolgoff and Fenstein argued that these initiatives were based on policymaker's distorted understanding about what people in Appalachia needed in terms of opportunities for self-advancement and involvement in societal decision-making. They stated that, "[S]ervices

were offered because one has not made it in society due to personal shortcomings and therefore needs assistance of a service nature" (p.83). After 30 years of such services, the Commission still has not met its goals (Appalachia Hollow Promises, 1999). Many underfunded nonprofit social welfare organizations in the Appalachian regions of Kentucky, West Virginia, and Ohio continue to underserve the health, mental health, housing needs, and education of the region.

Rural Education

When I was growing up in West Virginia, a very small portion of the local student body decided on post-secondary education. Most jobs in the area were affiliated with the coal mines and lumber mills which required great skill, but nothing that college could teach. Locke and Potter (2004) highlight that within the United States, West Virginia ranks last in the percentage of residents 25 years and older who have completed high school, and 48th in the percentage of those same residents who hold a bachelor's degree or higher. The United States Census (2000) reported that the high school I graduated from has the greatest discrepancy in the country between students who are interested in college (as determined by the numbers taking college entrance exams) and those who actually attend, 19.6%. Despite help with student loans, many of these students still can't afford to go to college because they have to work and help support their families.

Poole & More (2004) cites various factors contributing to the motivation and follow through of rural students from high school to college, primarily the influence of parents, most of whom were laborers. Men typically worked in natural resource industries and women who worked outside of the home were usually employed by "the sewing factory." More prestigious positions for women without a college background were at department stores in the county seat. Those who were fortunate enough to go to college frequently returned to the area to teach in public schools. Most public school teachers when I was growing up were women. In his work on Appalachian culture, Weller (1965) highlights that women were more likely to go to college, and that it was not

uncommon for a "college trained teacher to be married to a man who had not even finished high school" (p.110).

My Story, Continued

As a young person I aspired to go to college, and had no idea of the barriers that would hinder the attainment of that goal. My primary and most of my secondary educational experiences were generally good ones. However, during the later part of high school my personal life underwent great turbulence.

Weller (1965) discusses the tight knit structure of most mountain families and the desire and expectation that we will take care of our own. And so it was for me, even though I felt disconnected from many of the "typical" aspects of our culture. Unlike other families in the area whose maternal and paternal extended families stayed in one area, my mother had moved to the area where my father's family had lived since the 1750s. Most of my encounters were with my father's family, especially my paternal grandmother, "Nanny." I spent much of my life with Nanny who lived about 50 yards across a one-lane road from my parents.

Nanny had a massive stroke when I was 12-years old. Her partial recovery left her weakened, and when she returned home I took responsibility for her care. My duties were to be with her after school, on weekends, during the summer, and on holidays. We did not believe in formal institutions, especially nursing homes. Medicare services such as home health care had not yet been established, so our family had no outside assistance. This schedule left me very isolated from others, although my parents allowed me to participate in the high school band. However those were the only outings I could attend besides going to school, so socialization with friends was rare.

When I became old enough to have a boyfriend, only one boy met with my mother's approval, and I was not allowed to date anyone else. My boyfriend was allowed to visit me at Nanny's without supervision, and I became pregnant at 15. My parents and in-laws told me that I could not go back to high school. The unspoken rules about teenage pregnancy maintained that this embarrassing issue did not

need to be publicized in the public school system.

School had been the one constant in my life and I was very scared about being forced to quit during my junior year. I was almost resigned to this fate when my new husband's grandmother, a longtime educator, insisted that I should return to school regardless of my pregnancy. Her edict was upheld and I was allowed to continue my education. In November of that year my daughter was born. Complications during her birth left her with a severe disability. Throughout the remainder of high school, I took care of my daughter (who rarely slept) and my grandmother. I also became a survivor of domestic violence.

There were no services for battered women in the area at the time; domestic violence was considered to be a private matter. Under the circumstances of "having to get married," I was seen as something of a harlot who had entrapped a very fine upstanding young man. I felt humiliated and assumed that people thought I deserved whatever I got in the marriage. Although many knew of the emotional and physical violence, they were unable or unwilling to help either of us because of cultural norms.

Fortunately, the strength and resilience that the women in my family had modeled for me as a child proved to be the most valuable aspect of my identity: I did not give up on my education. By taking correspondence courses and attending summer school, I graduated with the class of 1973. Though my new husband and I had a difficult relationship, his grandmother remained an invaluable support to me as a young woman trying to better myself. She provided support to me throughout the ordeal and will always remain in my thoughts as one of the most dynamic women I have ever known.

As a teenage mother of a child with severe disabilities, I spent many hours with pediatric neurologists at West Virginia University and The University of Virginia Medical Centers to find help for my daughter. I began these visits when I was 16 and took my daughter to be examined on a regular basis until I was 21. I was told that she would not progress beyond her current level of

development and was advised to institutionalize her. My family was very much against that and made their opinions known.

I tried everything I could think of to assist my daughter. I remember going to the Department of Welfare to ask if there was someone to teach me how to exercise her limbs because she could not sit up, hold her head up, or walk. But there were no early intervention services at that time; all they offered to give me was food stamps, which I didn't need. Once again, the help that I needed was not available.

When I turned 21, I went against my family's opinion and made the decision to institutionalize my daughter. After years of sleepless nights and of being physically and emotionally abused by my new husband, I realized that I could not help my daughter if I didn't help myself. I called the Collin Anderson Center, which was a state institution for children with mental retardation. I was told there was an 8-year waiting list. I was devastated, but determined to take control of my life. My father had strong political ties – another aspect of my social class privilege. I summoned the courage to contact a friend of my father's who was very powerful. I had known him since I was a child, and he was familiar with my situation. I told him my thoughts about institutionalization and about the long waiting list. The next day, the Director of what was then known as the State Department of Crippled Children contacted my dad to say that we could bring my daughter to the institution. My father was furious, but I stood my ground and explained that I needed to do something with my life, and that this would be the best thing for my daughter and me. It was the hardest thing I have ever done. I am not prone to giving up on anything and it felt like I was giving up on her. I also felt as if the community looked upon me as a bad mother for doing such a callous thing. Looking back, I recognize that this would have never happened were it not for the social class privilege I had. How would my life have turned out had I not been able to make that phone call?

I decided to make it a double header and divorce my abusive husband. I incurred a bad reputation with many people in the area

(including my own family) for these actions, but I was finally free. I moved to Morgantown, got a job, and enrolled at West Virginia University.

After years of fearing for my life and having a low sense of self-esteem, I finally felt empowered. That sense of empowerment was one of the most important aspects of my identity. Knowing that I could make such a huge change in my life gave me the confidence to finish both a master's degree and a doctoral program. Looking back on my actions, I realize that I have a strong survival instinct, which was modeled by the women in my life; by those who were formally educated, as well as those who – because of life circumstances – had to turn down educational opportunities.

With the passage of time, and because I went away and achieved my professional goals, my reputation has recovered in the eyes of my family and the community. However, because of my love of the mountains and my family, it has been a difficult journey for me to have spent the better part of my adult life away from “home.” I believe I have assisted many people during my career as a social worker, but I have failed to assist the very people that I dedicated myself to so long ago. Weller (1965) ironically discusses this aspect of Appalachian perception, indicating that no matter how far we go or how long we are away from our communities, we frequently experience psychological attachments to the land and to our reference group, and dream of the day when our personal and financial issues are settled and we can return “home.”

Conclusion

Important life lessons are not usually neatly packaged. I have come to understand that my basic identity has been forged by the social awareness gained in my childhood home. Because life is dynamic I have developed other identities that have evolved from those initial years. The inherent tensions between my identities as a child from a marginalized culture, a young mother of a disabled child, a young adult from a privileged family with political connections, a social worker, and an educator have given rise to great learning and teaching experiences throughout my life. My

experiences are still difficult to share with acquaintances for fear of ridicule. It has been made clear to me over the years through remarks, jokes, and condescending questions that I have often been considered inferior. Interactions like these both infuriate and sadden me, because although my culture is considered to be underprivileged by the larger society, I know the aspects of cultural strength that are also part of it. Coming to terms with the concept that my culture is economically, politically, and culturally powerless has been difficult.

Acceptance

I have come to consciously acknowledge the historical marginalization of my culture as I review my childhood perceptions. I was witness to the development of well-meaning, yet inept social and educational programs in Appalachia, based on the erroneous perceptions of my culture by those in power. As part of my resilience, I have attempted to ignore the painful aspects of powerlessness in my culture in favor of discussing our rich cultural values and beliefs. However, I now recognize that there has to be balance between seeing one's culture as solely marginalized or solely privileged. Discovering this balance has led to the realization that efforts must be made to competently assist Appalachians with using their resources, knowledge, and resilience to enhance the social, political, and economic aspects of the culture.

My identity as an educator has enhanced my understanding of the inherent problems facing our culture. As a result, I have focused my research on assessing organizational effectiveness in rural social welfare agencies, efficacy in rural social work practice, and design of rural social work educational delivery systems. As an educator, I am fortunate to be able to influence my students to become competent social workers. I regularly incorporate aspects of my identity in the classroom to assist my students in becoming knowledgeable about cultural disparities and cultural nuances of their clients. I structure my lessons with the idea that the students take into consideration that what they initially see

in their clients is only a glimpse of the depth and complexity inherent in each person.

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THE SEARCH FOR A MIDDLE GROUND

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The struggle between understanding and accepting one's own privilege and working with oppressed populations is explored through the following personal narrative. The role of privilege is debated—from childhood memories through development of a professional self—with the realization that there is no easy answer.

I have never been much of a coffee drinker, so when I found a Starbucks gift card inside a thank you card for a speaking engagement, I wasn't quite sure what I was going to do with it. One chilly Colorado morning, upon learning that McDonalds no longer served hot chocolate, I remembered the Starbucks card. So I got my hot chocolate, but figured I would also bring a coffee drink home for my husband. I ordered the white chocolate mocha, liking the sound of it. As I drove home, the mocha began to drip out of the side of the cup. Knowing I had to protect my car interior, I took a sip of the drink. Never in my life had I tasted anything so wonderful and delicious. With that one taste, I was hooked.

Over the next few months, those Starbucks drinks became my reward, my comfort, and my morning encouragement. One morning while enjoying my little piece of heaven, I looked over and saw a man holding a sign that read: "Will work for food." In that moment, I had a crisis of conscience. Was I really sitting in my car drinking a four dollar cup of coffee while this man had nothing to eat? I knew I was not comfortable with this scenario, but at that moment I did not know what to do. On one hand, I work hard to earn my money and I am typically responsible with my monetary choices. Do I not deserve a treat every now and then, even if some may perceive it as excessive? On the other hand, the money I spent on this single cup of coffee could have provided a meal for this poor man. I could not resolve it, so I came up with a compromise; I would continue to buy my coffee, but I would purchase a coffee for him

as well. But then I was too worried about getting the right kind. Should I get him regular or decaf? What if he has a health condition in which he shouldn't have milk or sugar? What if he doesn't even like coffee? The whole issue became too complicated for me. So I stopped going to Starbucks and I stopped driving past that corner. Problem solved – right?

I have told my family not to write an obituary when I die, just tell this story. This scenario sums up not only the dichotomy that has become my day-to-day life, but gives an accurate picture of the struggle between what I see in the world and the kind of person I strive to be. The compromise between how I care for myself personally and what I know professionally is something I have yet to understand. How do I live my life according to my professional values, stand up for justice, fight oppression, and ensure equality for the underserved while also living comfortably, which may inadvertently contribute to the societal problems?

When the opportunity to address this issue in the *Reflections* came about, I struggled with the decision to pursue it. At first I think it was difficult because it is hard for me to acknowledge to others that I am a person of privilege. Especially when sitting with those I serve, it sometimes feels as though the ease of my life is something for which I should be ashamed. Logically, I know that I did not pick my gender, skin color, or family of origin differently than anyone else, but that does not seem to make a difference. One day as I was leaving the parking lot, a coworker made a positive comment about the car I was driving; specifically, "Wow, how much are they paying

social workers these days?" Now my car is nothing fancy, but it was new and shiny. However, rather than responding with pride or laughing at the joke, I felt ashamed. I don't deserve to be driving a nice car when my clients can barely afford bus money, and I felt as though this was something my coworker was implying. So once again, rather than addressing it, I began driving a 12-year old Honda Civic with hail damage and a leaky window. It just seemed more fitting for a social worker and saved me from having to justify myself. Just based on the emotion I felt around this one situation, could I really write a whole paper that exposes my shame and justifies my actions?

I also found myself struggling with this project because I don't know that I acknowledge that I really am person of privilege. I can pay my bills every month and have most of life's basic necessities. By choice or by chance, my life has been relatively easy and I have been able to position myself to a place in the world where I am comfortable. But maybe I only have this life and certain opportunities because I am privileged. Maybe part of my reluctance in even addressing this issue is that I don't know that I want to have to struggle; I don't want to give up the rights, luxuries, and benefits afforded to me by nature of my skin color, belief system and social standing (Haney Lopez, 1996). If I acknowledge it, then I actually have to do something about it; and I don't know that I can or that I want to. Maybe this is reason for my reluctance and likely, for my shame.

Every time I sat down to address this issue, despite the fact it is important to me, I was unable to do so. It was too overwhelming; too much work to try to understand my dual roles. So much like the Starbucks situation, I kept giving up. I thought about it for several months, yet did nothing. It was not until I heard Dave Matthews' new song, *Funny the Way It Is* (2009) that I changed my mind. This song highlights the dichotomy between contentment and struggle in our world. The song offers no judgment, no answers, and no explanation; it just puts the issue on the table. It made me realize that my narrative did not have to be a justification of my choices, an apology for my

behavior, or even an attempt to make changes. It is just a chance to share my struggle with the realization that no solution may even exist. And that possibly the solution is to simply acknowledge that happiness and sadness, privilege and poverty, hope and pain, all exist simultaneously.

This process of understanding the role of privilege has been a life long journey for me. In fact, the relationship between money and life satisfaction has been a topic present on my mind since I was a small child. As a kid, I had the opportunity to witness both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum while existing safely in the middle. I grew up in a small town where the economy had failed. Unemployment was rampant, as were many of the problems that exist when there are not enough resources to meet the needs. However, this town is also a bedroom community to an extremely wealthy resort. Million dollar "vacation homes" that sat empty much of the time, visits from celebrities, fancy restaurants, and luxury vehicles were commonplace. I was well aware of the differences between these two communities and often felt frustrated. This other community had the ability to help and support our community, but instead they took advantage of our situation. I never knew what to do to make them pay for this injustice; I was only able to feel sadness and anger at watching it happen.

On a smaller scale, I also experienced this pain personally. Heartache struck at age 8, when I was ridiculed for not having an authentic Cabbage Patch doll. I hated those mean girls, I hated my parents for not being richer, and mostly, I hated that stupid fake doll. Two years later when I finally got a *real* Cabbage Patch Doll, I realized the dolls were not that great; especially since I had never been one to play with dolls in the first place. So why had it been such a big deal at the time? Only as I write this now can I understand that it was not about the doll, it was about the social meaning that the doll represented. It was about not being included; having others look at me as different; having been told "you can't;" knowing the only way to regain my power and sense of self was through that doll and what it symbolized;

yet I did not have the means to obtain any of it.

About the same time, my parents had run into some financial problems. Again, I felt powerless. I knew the only way to “fix” my parents, my family, and to have happiness and security was to have more money. At a very young age I made it my responsibility to understand, appreciate, and desire money. That year, I sold more than double the amount of Girl Scout cookies than anyone in my troop. I set up neighborhood businesses mowing lawns and feeding pets, and began to plan how I would be a self-sufficient entrepreneur by the time I was out of high school. My brother and I frequently daydreamed about the days we would be rich and even bought each other shirts for Christmas that read, “The only thing money can’t buy is poverty” and “Anyone who says money can’t buy happiness doesn’t know where to shop.” We had the “Greed is Good” speech from the movie *Wall Street* (1987) hanging on the wall. We would insult each other by yelling out names of low-paying jobs, such as “teacher!” or “social worker!” I remember being given a homework assignment to write an essay choosing to have love, money, fame, or friendship for the rest of our lives. I was surprised to learn that I was the only one in the class who picked money. I called out the rest of the class on their foolishness and the teacher referred to me as “the little CEO” for the rest of the school year. As an impulsive adolescent, I even got a dollar sign tattoo (sad, I know, but completely true) because I thought that was a perfect symbol of my identity.

These thoughts and feelings were also reflected in the dominant discourse of society at the time, which has now led to a nation overwhelmed by personal and collective debt. The messages from television and politicians were that you work hard, *no matter what it takes*, and buy as many material possessions as possible; because the only way to measure a person’s worth was by the things you owned. So I worked hard. My family’s finances never seemed to recover to the amount I thought sufficient, but I managed my personal finances impeccably. I began working at age 14 and maintained employment all through high school,

often working two or three jobs at a time. I joined clubs, ran the student government and did everything I needed to position myself for college acceptance, which would further my dreams of wealth, respect, and of course, happiness.

But there was a hitch in my plan. I guess I should have thought better of attending a college whose motto is “Educating Men and Women in the Service of Others.” Although I knew a college education was the first step to great wealth, I was not prepared for what I would actually learn while there. The change in my life path started small, with an option for the kind-hearted and the overachieving students to earn extra credit for something called “service learning.” I would like to say I agreed to this because of some intrinsic value to help, but it was really about the extra credit and the idea I would look good in the eyes of those who really mattered. For my first project, I volunteered at a hospice for men with AIDS. I was welcomed, accepted, and treated with love and compassion despite the fact I had nothing to give but myself. Although I am sure they appreciated having their lawn mowed, it was the simple act of listening to their stories, being present, showing mutual respect and caring, and the acceptance that we both appreciated. I felt safe, secure, accepted, and happy—even though no money was involved. Weird. Then something else happened; their vulnerability and acceptance allowed me to also become emotionally vulnerable. Oddly it was this vulnerability—not money or power—that allowed me to find contentment (Kavanaugh, 1991).

From then on, things changed. I volunteered in an elementary school and felt a contentment and connection that did not exist when I volunteered at Republican headquarters. I began working in the school’s office for service learning, where I came to further understand the role that service plays in education, religion, personal development, and community involvement. I became concerned about social justice and the good of the world. I found I actually cared less about my money and cared more about my soul.

I spent my spring breaks in rural Mexico, where I really began to understand poverty. I

saw and experienced first-hand how a failing economy, competition for work, and no government support for agriculture or industry leads to situations with no good choices. I met people of supreme faith; people who had nothing else. And while we were there, we were able to debate the issue of the role of faith in privilege, exploring how the Bible itself presents paradoxes regarding poverty and wealth:

"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19:21-24, Revised Standard Version)

"It is when you store up treasures for yourself you are not rich in the sight of God" (Luke 12:20-21)

"How happy are the poor: yours is the Kingdom of God, but alas, you who are rich are having your consolation now." (Luke 6:21-24)

Despite these verses, churches have thrived for hundreds of years in ornamentation and excess, even in the most difficult of economic times. Yet the church also provides for the poor and supports members who are in need of help. The church professes to care for all, yet excludes many. I have yet to understand any of the mixed messages from the church about oppressed populations. Again, too big for me to figure out, I can only take away the belief that ultimately, God wants us to care for each other:

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison you came to see me...insofar as you did this to one

of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."
(Matthew 25:34-40)

If we serve the poor and treat those who are oppressed with kindness, are we doing all we can? (Kavanaugh, 1991)

It is not that simple. The thing that gives me strength also gives me unseen power. Not long ago, I heard something that suggested spirituality is also a function of privilege. I wanted to ignore this statement, primarily because I can't do this work without my faith. I can't imagine having to give this up. But it also reminded me that if my belief system is so important to me, it is likely equally as important to others. In fact, people give up homes, families, possessions, go into exile, fight wars, go to jail, and even die for the right to have and practice their beliefs. But I have an advantage. I have complete freedom to practice my faith openly. I can freely share my thoughts and opinions as they are shared by many of those with privilege within this country. I would like to think my belief system does not preclude me from understanding or connecting with others of differing beliefs, but I know I take this privilege and freedom for granted. I guess I don't have to give up my belief system, but I wish there was a way I could level the playing field.

After my return from Mexico, I became even more committed to living a life of service. The more involved I became in the community and the more I learned about oppression in my MSW classes, the harder it became to tolerate the contradiction that stratified our society. I decided that money was not the solution, but was the problem itself. I found myself getting angry at celebrities, professional athletes, politicians, and almost everyone else who did not care about the poor as much as I did. How could they all be so irresponsible? How could they justify million dollar homes, seven figure salaries, and private jets when so many people do not even have a place to live? But I also got mad at the clients too. I would get frustrated at learning a family arrived in town with nothing – no money no plan, and no

place to live. I couldn't hear their justifications that there was no work and no hope in the town they had left. I know now that this anger was my reaction to feeling powerless to actually help them.

I understand this anger is only a minute example of what those who struggle with poverty and oppression deal with every day. One time a friend was perusing my musical selections and pointed out how many of my musical choices are quite angry. When questioned about this, I could only answer that due to the trauma of my work life, I really don't need any more misery. I just wanted to feel something different and anger seemed to be the easiest choice. It was at that moment I began to question my understanding of violence, especially among oppressed populations. Could it be that for those who only feel powerlessness, hopelessness, and frustration, violence is one way to feel some type of control when resources and opportunity are lacking?

But I did not like feeling angry especially because I couldn't really understand what I was so angry about. Whether out of solidarity or as a way to manage my own feelings (Haney Lopez, 1996), I needed to prove to myself that I understood and supported this issue. I began to give up all the things I once found important and began to live a life of simplicity. I took public transportation, ate Ramen noodles, shopped at thrift stores, and spent my free time volunteering. But my new vow of poverty also included giving up many of the friends and activities that once provided me comfort and amusement. How could I possibly justify having fun when so many people in the world were struggling with misery, poverty, and pain? One evening, much to my dismay, my friends talked me into going out. As we were waiting to get into a downtown bar, I found myself wandering toward the corners, talking to the people panhandling. I just felt more comfortable there. At that moment, I realized how far I had gone. Giving up everything had not given others more. Deprivation had not eased anyone's pain or even made me feel any better. But I also knew that this was not real; that I could easily return to my life of comfort whereas those around

me could not. Because of my skin color, my family connections, my education, and my religious beliefs, I could change my decision to live in poverty. Others do not have the option to change their situation as easily. The acknowledgement of this makes me feel sad and helpless.

After having tried to experience both ends of the spectrum, I now realize there may not be a solution. The longer I am in the social work field, the more comfortable I am with the idea of accepting that some problems do not have solutions. In fact, both psychoanalytic theory (Kernberg, Selzer, Koenigsberg & Carr, 1989) and modern behavioral theories (Linehan, 1993) support psychological health as the ability to accept two seemingly contradictory ideas, thoughts, or opinions at the same time. For me, this means I can work with, help, serve, care about, and even understand those who struggle with poverty, oppression, and powerlessness without having to put myself in the same position. Much like other types of issues our clients present to us, we do not have to have experienced them first hand in order to empathize and talk through their difficulties. In fact, I am of more benefit to them if I can hold the hope for both of us without becoming overwhelmed by my own anger, sadness, misery, and pain.

Despite beginning to understand this within myself, I can remain judgmental about those whom, I believe, are people of privilege. A few years ago I went from working with populations who were clearly oppressed and underserved to working in a fee-for-service medical clinic. We do accept Medicare and Medicaid, but all patients must be able to pay. We do not do any indigent care, nor do we have a sliding scale fee. For the first time in my professional career, I began to work with patients who have access to resources. Working with others who have more than me is something I do not know if I am comfortable with, so I volunteer to take the Medicare/Medicaid patients. I claim to see these patients because I have a strong commitment to serve the underserved, which I do. But it also brings up a more troubling question for me, which is whether I need to treat this population as a way to maintain my own power (Haney Lopez,

1996), I would like to think it has more to do with trying to create equity and to provide a safe and compassionate environment for those I know other professionals tend to reject. But it is also something for me to be aware of and to continue questioning my intentions. This challenge has become a reality as I contemplate whether or not to see clients privately. This would force me into the position to decide how much to charge for my services and having to accept the reality that some may not be able to pay for them. I cannot deal with this reality yet, so I guess private practice will have to wait until I can make those hard decisions myself rather than allowing the system to do it for me.

I am hoping that I will have the chance to work through these judgments further by challenging myself to be able to find the same level of connection and vulnerability with those who may not be poor in the ways we typically define it. Recently, I received a wakeup call regarding this issue. Within our department a new, very high priced clinic was established. This clinic is restricted to people of privilege. Although it does not specifically say that on the brochure, the price for an intake is \$750 and they do not accept insurance. I was asked if I was going to do any work there. I quickly replied with a very self-righteous answer "No, I am committed to working with those who I know cannot afford me. It is not only the rich who deserve quality care." I believed what I was saying at the time and even found myself getting angry that anyone would challenge my commitment to serving the poor which I also took as a challenge to my commitment to my faith. Several months later, I was staffing patient cases when I made a similar comment again, and was challenged with this question, "Do you believe that just because they have money, their problems are any less painful?" I wanted to answer yes, but have thought about that question frequently. I am trying to be empathetic to the idea of spiritual and emotional poverty, not just material poverty (Kavanaugh, 1991), which may be an even harder issue to resolve.

As a social worker I take my commitment to working with oppressed populations very seriously, advocating for those who need it and

educating others on the significance of poverty and oppression. But as I educate those around me about issues of equality oppression, justice, and poverty, I also recognize that I have a lot to learn myself. In the experience of writing this narrative, I did not even touch on many other points I wanted and needed to make about the difficulties that exist among oppressed populations. But I think that was my struggle in the first place – this issue remains overwhelming, confusing, and paradoxical.

In the end, I don't know that I have a clear answer of how I went from "the little CEO" to being overwhelmed by guilt for drinking a Starbucks' white chocolate mocha. I guess I thought writing all of this down would give me some kind of answer or at least, a justification. Maybe no answer exists, but I can't allow myself to believe that. I can't accept that injustice and inequality are just a part of life. If I believed that giving up my white chocolate mocha would fix all of this, I happily would. But I don't think that is what this is all about. This is not just about serving the underserved, but also redefining my understanding of what it means to be "without." Poverty exists not only in those who lack resources. It also exists in those who have no hope, have lost their spirit, and do not know how to find peace or contentment. Maybe it's naiveté, maybe it's fear, or maybe it's professional survival, but I think I can understand these concepts without living them. After all, if I were as poor as those I serve, either financially, spiritually, or emotionally, what would I have to offer? I do think understanding and awareness are not enough; I also think I need to remain uncomfortable. I do not need to have an easy answer, but instead I need to sit with these complexities and contradictions so as to create enough of a problem for me that I have to do something about it. I don't know what that will look like, and maybe that was my difficulty with this narrative - I'm back where I started. I still have no way to resolve this, and unease about it all, but I think I am okay with that. Although I have not accepted inequity my place seems to be to stay in the struggle and attempt to find a middle path. I guess this is just where I need to be. For now.

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THE PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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In the following narrative, the author traces the often-traveled path of gaining privilege in the United States; in her case, from rural poverty in one of the poorest states to a relatively elite education and career possibilities. The climb upward was interrupted by the social upheavals of the 1960s that caused the author to reconsider her life and goals, and brought her back to her roots as an organizer and teacher.

The fact that I am able to write a narrative on privilege makes me a privileged human being. Just the fact that I am in the position to reflect on the subject indicates a privilege possessed by few, even in the most privileged society in human history

It was not always so. I was born and grew up in the narrowest setting possible in the United States: poor and rural, in a poor and rural county, state, and region. Many individuals I know from my background, including most members of my family say they never felt poor because everyone was poor. That's not how I remember it; I remember being ashamed and afraid, vulnerable and insecure. Being able to give voice to felt shame is an unparalleled privilege that I did not even know how to aspire to.

The process of recognizing privilege, and the lack thereof, has defined my life. That process has revolved around my ethnic identity, my status as a woman, my professional life, and radical politics; but above all, social class.

During the first six years of my life, my family sharecropped or rented farms near the tiny farming community of Piedmont, Oklahoma, where my father had grown up and his family had once owned land. Before I was born, my parents had sharecropped on a half-dozen farms in that area since they had married more than a decade before. The only crop the landlords allowed was cotton, a cash crop to sell. My father hated cotton; he wanted to raise food and stock. He wanted his own land to farm. He felt that raising and picking cotton

was like working in a factory. But he sharecropped to stay on the land until it was no longer possible, when cotton was replaced by wheat and mechanized. Then our family moved to Piedmont, and my father drove a tanker truck for a company based in a larger town, delivering diesel to the wheat farmers in west central Oklahoma.

We were not as poor as the families that lived in shacks on land they squatted until they were evicted, then moved on, passing through our school; not as poor all the time as the migrant cotton pickers, mostly African American, that my family joined in really hard times; not as poor as the Native Americans who lived on the main street of the county seat and in the rural Indian towns that dotted the county; and as my father always reminded us, not as poor as our relatives who lived in squalid tenements and run down shacks in the city where they could not raise their own food or keep a milk cow or hunt as we did. And we were not as poor as my mother had been growing up; the child of a Native American mother who had died when she was two and a drunken, itinerant Irish father. My mother was passed around to foster homes, to her sisters' homes, to an institution, and was often out on the streets of her hometown before finally marrying my father at 15.

A friend who grew up rural, poor, and "half-breed" (Métis) in Saskatchewan described poverty as a process of inferiorization, leaving a permanent imprint, no matter what one's future station in life (he, like me, became a university professor). He

called that imprint *damage*, and I agree. If one is fortunate enough to be conscious of the damage done, the rest of life becomes a process of trying to undo it. If one is not conscious, states of jealousy, resentment, and anger permeate life - Richard Nixon is a notorious and tragic example.

Those of us in the poorer classes who are bright or ambitious or simply at the right place at the right time are often plucked out of our circumstances and provided opportunities that are unimaginable in poor and working class communities. We are the ones, had we not been plucked out, who might have become community leaders and organizers for change and empowerment.

In the United States, uniquely among societies, from its beginning, there has existed a myth of "bettering" oneself, popularized in the early 19th century by author and minister Horatio Alger. Following a near workers' revolution in 1880-1940, and following the economic recovery resulting from the war industry, commodity consumerism—particularly home and car ownership—was introduced to the masses. Along with the extreme nationalism that was a by-product of war and a designated enemy, communism, class-consciousness has been very nearly erased while the income gap has widened.

One way of class climbing, easier for the female than the male in our patriarchal order is "marrying up." I did that (I thought), but my own class status led me to overestimate the relative insignificance of my climb, because I got nowhere near the ruling class or even the upper middle class. My own class background had me defining "rich" as having a brick house, running water, electricity, a bathroom (rather than outhouse), a new car, a family vacation every summer to a national park (preferably out of state), and a family's capacity to send their children for higher education. In my community, only a handful of families out of a hundred or so could realize those luxuries. I became familiar with city life during my last year of high school when I moved to Oklahoma City to go to trade school. While there, I realized that most of my classmates at that impoverished school had running water,

bathrooms, and electricity, so I adjusted my definition of rich somewhat.

My husband's family appeared wealthy to me. His father was a union carpenter who had become construction superintendent for a medium-sized privately owned construction company that built large commercial buildings around the Midwest and South. His family had moved around a lot, making them quite cosmopolitan in my eyes since I had only traveled to a few counties in Oklahoma and made one trip to see relatives in Texas. By the time we married, his father had retired and started his own small company for work on smaller local projects. The family owned a large piece of land on the northeast edge of Oklahoma City; land that had been in the mother's family for generations, once farmed but no longer. Some of the land was sold at a good profit to the state to build a new highway. So they were comfortable but not rich, as I would later realize when I met an actual member of the Rockefeller family.

The father had built a family home that seemed like a mansion to me, although it was only one story with three bedrooms and two baths; the rooms were not even that large. It was made of native stone with a huge stone fireplace; I had never seen a fireplace except in storybooks and movies. Next to the house was a garage, which housed the black Lincoln that impressed me more than anything else. Attached to the enclosed stone garage was a small three-room garage apartment with carpeted floors. My husband and I lived in that cottage for the first three years of our lives together; it was larger and finer than any place I had ever lived.

I had imagined that both my husband and I would continue studying at the University of Oklahoma where we had met my first year, his second. I thought his rich father would support us both, but that was not to be. My husband did not want to rely on his father now that he was married, and convinced me that I should "wait" to finish school, and work until he graduated. I went to work at a gas meter factory while my husband worked weekends at a gas station and summers as a carpenter. We even paid rent on the cottage. Despite this total self-reliance, my sisters-in-law, who did

not work, called me a freeloader who had married for money. This carried some truth, but was unrealized.

I remained in this family and the marriage for seven years, my husband and I moving to San Francisco halfway through. The mother had died the year before we married, and a new wife entered the family my first year there. She had come from a bustling Oklahoma town where, as the wife of a doctor, she had been one of the society ladies; she herself, however, had come from more humble beginnings. She wanted more than small town society, so left her husband and moved with her two teenaged children to Oklahoma City, where she met my father-in-law, a widower with his own business. She was two decades younger than his 67 years. My husband was barely 20, and his older five sisters—all married—were upset about this pretentious intruder trying to replace their beloved and humble mother. Every day they created drama around her behavior and projects, which included remodeling the old-fashioned interior of the family home. I had much in common with this “commoner,” but I kept my distance from her and joined in the complaining.

At the same time the sisters made me a project: a civilizing project. Three of the sisters lived in their own houses on the property with their families, while the two other sisters lived out of state. One sister took me under her wing as a mentor, calling me a “diamond in the rough” that needed polishing. I wanted to be polished; to be like her I imitated her in every respect: I started smoking, I read everything she read (literature, philosophy, history), I listened to her music (folk music, classical music, Harry Belafonte, Josh White). I dreamed her dreams of moving to San Francisco and meeting beatniks; I quit going to the lowly Southern Baptist Church and finally quit church altogether, embracing science as she did. I also learned liberal politics from her and the rest of the family. They were New Deal liberals who opposed segregation; these were the days of the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement and white supremacist violence in the South.

I became privileged intellectually, in my attitudes, my way of dressing, and way of

talking. I began looking down on people like myself: poor and rural, uneducated and ignorant, fundamentalist Christian. Not only was I smarter than the people I came from, I was better than the majority of people because I was liberal and agnostic in a sea of conservative Christians in Oklahoma and the rest of the South.

It was quite a blow when my husband and I moved to San Francisco and found that our tastes, looks, and politics were considered quite unpolished. “Okies” were still looked down on in California. I enrolled at San Francisco State where bohemian and radical types were omnipresent in their visibility if not in numbers. I wanted to be like them. I reset my aspirations leftwards, eschewing the idea of “making it” in the prescribed way. My husband turned more conservative as I sought radical politics in the dawning of the sixties; so I left him and his family to pursue my own path, alone in the world, having become alienated from my own family and class and kind. I learned to lie about my background, to say I was from the Midwest, that my father raised horses (he was a rodeo man and had one quarter horse). But in radical circles, no one really talked about his or her background or asked about others that much.

Although it was common knowledge, it was news to my naïve self that the movement was a collection of factions and cliques. Hard as I tried, I couldn’t find acceptance or mentorship. They didn’t know what to make of me or what to do with me, and I had no idea how to navigate the factions or understand their differences. The Movement was Black and White; Blacks were the impoverished victims, Whites the rich oppressors. They spoke of egalitarianism, equality even seemed to support “the working class,” but there were no workers or working class individuals among them. It would be a decade before I figured out that the Movement people I so wanted to befriend were themselves from the upper middle class, and some actually from the ruling class. They looked down on me.

After graduating with a history degree from San Francisco State, I went to graduate school for a year at UC Berkeley, then transferred to UCLA to specialize in Latin

American History. During my four years at UCLA as a graduate student and teaching assistant, I became privileged, and became aware of my privilege in a way I had not before. I also became aware of another aspect of my inferiority. I came to understand that it was not all about class. I was one of seven women graduate students in the large department, and there was only one woman faculty member. There was one African American and two Chicano graduate students (all males), and all the faculty members were white men, with the exception of one woman. Since the single woman professor specialized in "Near East" history and I was in Latin American History, I never had her for a class or as a mentor. Only at that time did I realize that in my whole time as an undergraduate student, I had never had a female professor or a professor of color.

A part of my new consciousness came from a budding, inchoate feminism reflected in the publication and best-seller status of Betty Freidan's *Feminine Mystique*, and the English language publication of Simone de Beauvoirs *The Second Sex* (it would be several years before a mass movement exploded). I had read the latter book in 1963, which led directly to me leaving my husband. However, the message from both books seemed to be that family, domesticity, motherhood, and being a wife were what crushed a woman's full potential. Yet when I had escaped from those traps and was a privileged history graduate student in one of the best departments in the country, an unmarried fellow graduate student asked me to type his paper. All the other male students were married to wives who worked to send them to school, just as I had done for my husband. I didn't have a "wife" to support me and type my papers.

At the same time I was becoming an outspoken feminist, I became increasingly involved in anti-racist activities, including joining the first university anti-apartheid group in the country, which was at UCLA, founded by South African exiles, Black and White. The Watts uprising in the summer of 1965 was next door to where I lived. The United Farm Workers and increasing Chicano militancy enveloped me, as did the revolutionary

movements and leaders in Latin America, especially Ché Guevara. But above all, the Vietnam War stole my heart and soul and made me a full time radical organizer (calling myself a revolutionary) by 1967.

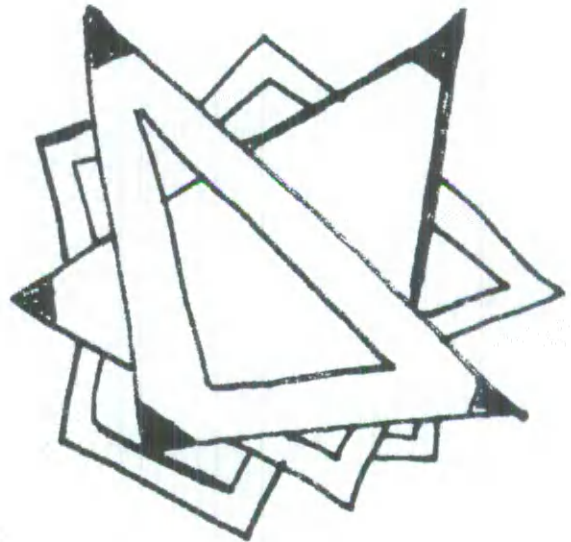
For the first time, I saw my class oppression in terms of capitalism and gender discrimination and in the context of domestic racism and U.S. imperialism. For the first time, I could recognize and acknowledge my own privilege, and responsibility, in terms of race and being a U.S. citizen.

On fire with anger at the male supremacy I experienced in the society at large, but even more appalled at its expression in the antiwar and civil rights movements, I decided to devote myself to organizing for a mass women's liberation movement, which from its onset would embody anti-racism, anti-capitalism, and anti-imperialism, not just pacifism as the existing women's peace groups emphasized; we would support national liberation, not just denounce imperialism and war. I also decided I had to burn my bridges with academia as I learned about its role in providing brain power to the system. I moved to the Northeast from which all power appeared to flow, and immediately found kindred spirits awakening to feminism. For the next two years I put my all into organizing women's liberation groups, as well as starting a journal, and travelling the country. But soon it became clear that radical anti-capitalism, anti-racism, and anti-imperialism were becoming marginalized as a strong current of counter-revolution prevailed; it was not so much that the right wing came to dominate immediately; rather that liberalism took up the most superficial aspects of radical analysis and drained it of content and power, then the right wing filled the vacuum.

After a stint of workplace organizing, I got involved with the American Indian Movement following the 1973 Wounded Knee uprising. I took the work seriously, and saw that what I could contribute most was research skills and teaching. I returned to UCLA to complete my dissertation and doctorate, and began teaching at a state university in the fledgling Native American Studies program, helping to develop a Department of Ethnic Studies.

As an educator, understanding privilege has been the bedrock of what I attempt to impart to students, just as I do as an organizer, a writer, and as a historian. My personal experience growing up as I did has placed me in conflict with my educator colleagues that have come from privileged settings and tend to see those who are unprivileged as the "other." This "othering" is, I believe, more harmful than outright discrimination and nearly always leads such educators (and organizers, social workers, etc.) to cynicism and disappointment. They need to begin with an act of faith and proceed from there: Every human being has the capacity to learn and to become self-determined; then, ask themselves: What do I need to learn in order to assist in that process? It is easier for me, because I have experienced my own process of learning and self-determination. But it is a requirement for anyone who seeks the liberation of all individuals and communities.

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PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXPLORATIONS OF POWER AND PRIVILEGE

Lynn Parker, Ph.D., University of Denver

This narrative begins with several vignettes from the author's life—the “crazy lady,” the sorority, dirt scraping—that launched a lifelong journey of learning about and being interested in issues of justice. These experiences are then placed in the context of the author's research on social-justice-based social work practice. Three interconnecting components are suggested for bringing issues of power and privilege into therapeutic conversation with clients: social education, a collective treatment format, and accountability measures.

“And it is a grave responsibility projected from within each of us, not to settle for the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe.”

- Audre Lorde (1984, p. 90)

As a White, heterosexual, professional class individual, I enjoy numerous privileges, many of which have been pointed out by other scholars and activists. As a heterosexual, I can be affectionate in public with my partner; I can marry; and I do not fear being judged, ostracized, or marginalized because of my sexual orientation or identity. As a White person, I can look at and consider buying a house in any neighborhood as long as I can afford it. I can mostly use bathrooms anywhere I go, as I can feign that I am staying in hotels I cannot afford. Less obvious perhaps to others but also to me, I don't have to be bothered with examining my privileges. I don't have to examine how I came to my sexual orientation or gender identity and I don't have to be aware of what it is like for others to do so. I don't have to know or be interested in the experience of poverty or homelessness or what it is like to feel unsafe or excluded because of one's gender expression, race, or undocumented status.

I grew up in the smallish, mostly working-class town of Englewood, Colorado, an older suburb of Denver. My neighborhood was relatively stable. Most residents moved in shortly after World War II, and the adults stayed well into old age. We children were

fortunate to be able to play outside under the eyes of caring neighbors without worry for our safety. The fathers had jobs, most mothers stayed home, and there were several single adults who lived alone (a retired school teacher, a divorced skating teacher, and a piano teacher). We, and a good share of our neighbors, belonged to the local Methodist church, a short walk away. On this platform of support and relative homogeneity I slowly began my education for critical consciousness.

I begin this reflection on privilege and oppression by sharing several vignettes that launched me on the path toward learning about and being interested in issues of justice. These experiences afforded beginning glimpses of power and privilege: Who has it, who does not, and under what conditions. Then I place these experiences in the context of my research on social-justice-based social work practice.

Beginning Glimpses of Power and Privilege: The Crazy Lady

I was in third grade. One afternoon, as my brother and I were doing yard work with our father in front of our house, my father stopped to chat with a woman passing by and then invited her in for dinner. I recognized her. She was the strange woman my classmates made fun of. We walked by her house each day on our way to school. She lived alone in an old run-down house that had boxes and stuff everywhere—house, yard, porch—all were very messy and in disrepair. She was likely a “hoarder.” The students thought she was

weird, even “crazy”—a witch. I was shocked, embarrassed. Why would my father invite her into our house? I was uncomfortable, afraid that some of my classmates might see her come into our house. Yet, I was even at the time also aware of my father’s generosity and the stance in his gesture. I felt proud of him. In this case, we had more power and privilege than she did. Though we were a working-class White family, she clearly struggled, both socially and economically. Perhaps she also struggled with mental health issues. Nonetheless, she was a charming and interesting dinner guest. At that age, I only had the perceptions of my peers—she’s crazy, weird—someone we make fun of, and then the perception of my father (and subsequently mother): She is someone we reach out to, ask in for dinner, find interesting and worthy of conversation. I both wanted to be like my father, and wanted to be accepted by my peers, though the decision was not hard, as I idolized my father. The lesson of that evening stuck with me. We stand by those whom others ostracize, and we invite them in, even when—especially when—that will likely marginalize us as well. Often the choice is pretty clear, but not easy. Social membership is often predicated upon gossiping about, making fun of others, starting in childhood, but then also in adulthood. Vivian Paley’s (1992) seminal study and book, *You Can’t Say You Can’t Play*, made the point well: With each growing year and starting as young as kindergarten, we learn and practice exclusion. It becomes a social norm. Her study investigated, in the kindergarten where she taught, whether it was possible to instigate another more inclusive norm, indicated in the title of her book. Interestingly, like many of her students, I felt some relief in having an alternative to exclusion. Inclusion felt better ultimately

The Dirt Scrapper

Also, at about the same time, there was a group of popular girls at school who played house together each recess. I “got” to play with them by agreeing to be the dirt scrapper (and other wannabes in the popular girls’ group) scraped the dirt out to make outlines of rooms for the house in which the group of girls

played. We dirt scrapers did not get to play house; we got to help make the house. It was not quite as pathetic as it sounds, but the reader gets the point—pretty pathetic—a memory that has remained. We clearly did not have elementary school teachers like Ms. Paley.

The dirt scraping experience was one of many that provided me glimpses into early hierarchical positioning: In this case, who was in and who was on the margin. Interestingly, at the time, I think I felt as if the dirt scrapper role was just part of membership criteria. I did not really question it. The privileged group gets to exact favors and work from those who are not as privileged in exchange for meager rewards. Although it is always easier to see the issues in the experience of being marginalized, I realize how important it is to recognize the fallout of my own privileged positions: who might be “scraping dirt” to get to play with me.

The Beauty Shop

My father’s beauty shop was a respite; not only for women in search of good hair but weary souls with no money for hair care who stopped by just to chat and have a cup of hot chocolate or instant soup (always available) before they made their way from town back up the hill to their homes. My father was a hairdresser and a social and civic activist. My mother was a stay-at-home mom/housewife until our high school years, when she went back to work as a secretary. Neither of my parents had opportunity for education beyond high school. Both valued education, were voracious readers, and encouraged and supported my brother’s and my higher education endeavors. Dad was involved in local politics and business organizations, and Mom was involved in service organizations. We learned early on that, “If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.” I wrote high school papers on the subject with coaching from my dad.

I became aware of homophobic prejudice early on with all the hairdresser jokes people freely told in my presence. My father had to look like a “man’s man” (non-smiling, conservatively dressed; not at all like my fun and eccentric dad) to be elected in local politics,

because he was socially located in what was considered by others to be an effeminate profession. And of course, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, but arguably, now as well, many men do not want to be like girls/women or a non-gender conforming "queer."

What were the costs or benefits of his adherence to socially acceptable clothing, stern looks in photographs, and so on in order to get elected and be considered worthy socially? We need to ask ourselves what it means when we play the game in order to achieve a goal; even a potentially laudable goal of wanting to have more power (get elected) so that we can make positive changes. What gets sacrificed? Of course, playing along serves to reinforce and maintain current systems of oppression and privilege. Is it worth the cost? How do we evaluate that? I was proud of my father's politics: "Serve those who have the least." I witnessed him at city council meetings (shockingly often the only person awake) vote against mainstream politics, be responsive to people's needs, and refuse to take bribes. But then he was my Dad, and I was young. What was the cost? I am aware that he had heart attacks early and died at 68. And serious men in suits remain more likely to be elected, though there are not many hairdressers in the pool. On the other hand, he is remembered well by community people with whom I grew up, and I think he made a difference.

The Feminist

My early feminist training occurred by way of a women's weekend in the 1970s with Anne Schaefer. It was there I gained beginning awareness of the experiential differences between being male and female. One event stands out. We went as a group to a hot mineral spring, where I had my first experience of being nude with a group of women. I was in my late 20s and had never experienced that before. Once we were settled in the pools, Anne encouraged us to look at each other and to share what we liked and didn't like about our bodies. I was aware that though our bodies were very different from each other and from idealized images, they were right for each of us. It was a profound experience for me to

experience this and to realize that none of us felt good about our bodies. As we shared, I became aware that most of us held an ideal image from the media (at that time, mostly from *Playboy Magazine*) of what a perfect female body should look like. Of course, none of us did compare. But, as we shared, we were aware of the profound effect the media images had on our own body perceptions. No matter what the reality was, all of us found our bodies lacking. We all were systematically taught to hate ourselves, to compete for male attention, and not to share meaningfully with other women.

When I came home, I was eager to share my newfound awareness with my brother and male partner. But they really didn't understand what was so profound for me. What was the big deal? They each had experienced nudity with other men, in gyms, swimming pools, and bathrooms, and assumed I had similar experiences with women. As we talked, we became aware that the experience of those places was very different for men and women. In my locker rooms, there were curtains everywhere that protected my privacy while changing clothes, showering, or going to the bathroom; very different than the men's side, which provided no privacy for those activities. My first nude experience with a group of women occurred in my late 20s, whereas nudity with other men was not at all a new, much less an enlightening, experience for them. Although privacy can offer protection, it also offers a message: that the body is something to hide, to be ashamed of.

The Sorority

I joined a sorority my first year of college, at a state school. It was my first time living away from home (only an hour and a half), and I was homesick. I thought a sorority would be like a family. Maybe it was for some, but for me, it signaled a crisis. It was elitist; we "rushed" for bubbly, pretty, popular, White girls, who also did well academically. There were "sneaks" with fraternities. The whole thing was awful for me. Unfortunately, I thought something was wrong with me because I wasn't excited about the activities or things that my sorority sisters were excited about,

and I became quite depressed my sophomore year when I lived in the sorority house. Fortunately, upon my return to school the following year, I had a change in perspective. Whereas I had assumed something must be wrong with me, I was able to realize that my values were very different from those that underlie most sororities. I grew empowered as I identified what was incongruent (elitism, latent racism, a "sisterhood" that did not exist in actuality). Quitting was unusual in those days, and it was liberating. I wrote a sociology paper on the experience, which allowed me to see it.

Marriage

As the female partner in marriage to a man, I was chagrined to notice that I was demoted from being a "taxpayer" on IRS forms to "spouse." This was (is) especially egregious as I do not co-mingle finances with my partner. When I became married, my accountant of many years suddenly addressed all communications to my husband, who was new to him. I received notes of congratulation from some of my university colleagues, who addressed the notes to me with my name changed to my husband's last name. They apparently assumed I forsook my last name for my husband's. This unquestioned assumption was made by professors in a social work program dominated by women, where my scholarship was (is) feminist practice. So ingrained are traditional gender roles that many faculty did not even consider I might keep my own name.

This unquestioned adherence to gender roles has not much changed. Today, most young heterosexual women still assume their husband's last name. I work to be vigilant in my therapy sessions to help couples examine these decisions. For example, I ask heterosexual couples how they decided which name to use if someone changed their name. For most, the decision was not conscious, it was automatic. And for most, the notion that a male would consider taking his female partner's name seems outlandish. Who carries the privilege and power to name others and to be named for? What are other implications of this practice?

Racism/Ableism

When I am with my brilliant, darker-skinned Asian Indian colleague, who must use crutches or a wheelchair because of childhood polio, I notice that waiters and service people often only address me, expecting me to order for her or to make her decisions. They address *me* instead of her when assessing her needs and wants. I also am acutely aware of how many places do not accommodate people with disabilities, even when they profess that they do. I have many times painfully witnessed the dehumanizing and embarrassing situations that she is unable to negotiate without great difficulty, because of the lack of accessibility as well as the discomfort and unconsciousness of many of the people with whom we come into contact. She, of course, has to negotiate this discrimination daily. I do not. But I can try to maintain this awareness when I am not with her. I can be aware of what it means to patronize restaurants, stores, towns, and cities that are not accessible. I can be sensitive and proactive to help meet the needs of persons who are not physically or psychologically able to navigate as easily as I am. Lack of accessibility keeps people out, literally. They cannot have a voice if they cannot get in the door. I am acutely aware when I am in Cuernavaca, Mexico, teaching my class on *Global Relations and Poverty in Mexico* that it would be impossible for my friend to accompany me. She would love the course and the people with whom we dialogue. But the city structure, filled with large steps and uneven cobbled streets, is completely inhospitable to her.

Similarly, when I was in the company of my elderly mother before her death, age discrimination (ageism) coupled with ableism (she needed a walker) rendered her to others incapable of making her own decisions, small and big. In her case too, people asked me about her preferences rather than her.

We listen more closely, ask questions, defer to people whom we regard as having more power and privilege than we do. We more easily dismiss, make fun of, or disregard those whom we regard as having less power and privilege than we do.

I observe the process of depersonalization and lack of respect afforded my university colleagues as they age. Even in social work, which purportedly embodies humanistic and social justice values, ageism is alive and sadly flourishing. As my colleagues age, rather than being respected for their wisdom, work, and contribution, they are too often treated disrespectfully. Others wait for them to retire, eager for them to be discarded.

Soul Selling

Higher education is a conservatizing process. Faculty members adhere to and, in a sense, sell their souls to an extremely hierarchical system. Gaining power in the system further binds them to its rules. Faculty lore suggests that “junior,” untenured faculty should not speak their truth—not rock the boat—until they have tenure. So they comply remaining mostly silent for 6 to 7 years, reinforcing the status quo, churning out publications, trying to obtain grants, and yes, teaching in an adequate manner. Once faculty members gain tenure, they have often swallowed their voice for so many years that they appear to be beyond regaining it. And at that point, what is their lived message? Sell yourself, your principles, for the privilege of tenure? The practice of silence for 6 or more years does not produce or nurture radicals. Rather, it produces people that argue for and guard the system that silenced and now privileges them. People protect their power and privilege. Those who have it do not want to let it go, and they strive to keep their group small, coveted. I must say here that my experience of academia is not unlike my experience of the sorority: the elitism and the search, tenure, and promotion processes are unsettlingly much like sorority rush.

I am now a tenured professor in a graduate social work program. I came to academia late in my career, having been a clinical social worker/family therapist for many years before I pursued the Ph.D. I would like to think I am an exception to soul selling; but of course, I am not. I find myself sometimes being critical, mean spirited like those around me. Though I try to employ practices to stay in touch with what is important to me—integrity kindness,

and respect—I am too often not successful. I feel a responsibility to use my tenured position to speak up on issues of justice, but am often the lone voice. As such, I fear I am easily rendered a bit wacky, not a serious “critical thinking” academic. Though we, as a school, profess social justice as an overarching mission, we too often fail to practice it with each other or our students. Our collective critical consciousness development is “well meaning” but incomplete (Zetzer 2005).

As readers can see, I grew up fairly privileged and I remain so. I am of the professional class, able-bodied, heterosexual, White, female identified, and born into a body in which I am mostly comfortable. I was bestowed with working-class values that have served me well: Work hard, save your money be responsible for self, help those who are less fortunate. It is only my gender and perhaps now my age (63) that personally provide glimpses into what it means to be marginalized.

For the last 15 years, I have studied exemplary approaches to social-justice-based practice through interviews with notable feminist family therapists (Parker 1997, 1998a, 1998b), then conducted two intensive case studies of exemplary social-justice-based family services programs (Parker 2003, 2008; see appendix for participants). My journey early on consistently pointed me in this direction: How do we help the least of us, and how do we notice when we are not? Moreover how do we recognize and address issues of power and privilege in practice?

Addressing Power and Privilege in Practice

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you’ve come here because your liberation is bound up with mine, let us work together.”

- Lila Watson (n.d.), Australian Aboriginal activist

Who has access to power and privilege, who does not, in what situations, and how, remain the unspoken and unaddressed issues in social life: in relationships, families, and organizations. Why? Most of us collude to deny this unequal access to power and privilege

because raising the issues is upsetting: It unearths unspoken rules of hierarchy . And once raised, we need to address the issues, which is not easy. The issues are not often the subjects of polite conversation. Accordingly, the manner in which these issues are broached in sessions with clients becomes a central challenge for professional helpers committed to relational and social justice. They cannot wait for clients to recognize and then raise power or privilege as an issue. Rather , they must lead in that effort.

So, how do professional helpers concerned about issues of relational and social justice manage to bring power issues into conversation, when it is the last thing anyone wants to address? First, they must commit to their own ongoing consciousness raising. Therapists must read, take workshops, and immerse themselves in education for critical consciousness, so that they are able to recognize issues of power and privilege in their own lives, and then in the ordinary issues clients bring to therapy . Good resources for therapists include Aldarondo(2007), Almeida, Dolan-Del Vecchio, and Parker (2008), Carter and Peters (1996), Dolan-DelVecchio (2008), Finn and Jacobson (2003), Keeling (2007), McIntosh (1990), McGoldrick and Hardy (2008), Mirkin, Suyemoto, and Okun (2005), Papp (2001), Silverstein and Goodrich (2003), Waldegrave, Tamasese, Tuhaka, and Campbell (2003), and Zimmerman (2001).

Once therapists have done their homework, how to raise the issues with clients becomes the challenge. How do they raise the issues and not lose their clients, particularly those who hold more power and privilege and are therefore not so eager to give them up? How do they make what has been invisible to clients, more visible; what has been comfortable, less comfortable; and what has been absent, present? The dynamics of White privilege, diversity, social class, and power are rarely mentioned by clients. As such, therapists must garner the courage and develop tools for bringing these issues into clients' awareness for examination and dialogue. I suggest three interconnecting components to help facilitate this process in therapy: social education, a

collective treatment format, and accountability measures.

Social Education

The process of gaining critical consciousness via social education helps clients to begin linking their interpersonal dynamics with sociopolitical realities. This can be accomplished in a matter-of-fact manner through the questions therapists ask as well as the use of tools, such as power and control wheels (Almeida et al., 2008), which help to assess for domestic and other misuses of power and privilege. They also educate clients about what constitutes power and control issues. Therapists can ask, along with other information gathering, questions that begin to unearth the power structure in clients' relationships. For example, they may ask, how are major decisions made in the family? Who tends to have the final voice? Are partners employed? How much money does each make? Are both partners economically viable if their relationship should dissolve? Can each partner support themselves and their children should they need to do so? When there are disparities in earning, partners can be asked about what impact the disparities have on their decision-making. Is there someone who more often accommodates or whose preferences more often are given priority? How are house and people care responsibilities distributed? Are there outside or government agencies involved with family members? The specifics of these and other arrangements help clients to begin to decipher the power and privilege disparities that likely underlie some of the issues for which they are seeking therapy . Again, depending on the client context, the questions can be asked in the same way that therapists ask about extended family , work, ages, and other such issues. Access to money, division of household labor , and decision-making ability are often distributed according to the amount of power people hold. As these issues are raised into clients' awareness and connected to the issues for which they have come to therapy, clients are then empowered to examine any changes they want to make.

In-session exercises, education, and homework assignments provide other ways to

elicit issues of power and privilege and to raise people's consciousness regarding the prevalence of such issues in their relationships. For example, as a homework assignment, family members may be asked to list what each actually does regarding household/childcare chores in a given day. Inequities become apparent in the concrete lists that are generated (Ault-Riche, 1994) and can then be reconsidered to create more balance and equity.

In a sense, the way sessions are organized should provide a kind of power-issues literacy training for clients. As in the previous examples, this can occur by way of specific, concrete questions that raise power inequities. It can also occur by way of genogram work, where therapists examine with partners the transmission of issues of power and privilege down the generations. Hardy and Laszloffy's (1995) cultural genogram and Halevy's (1998) "genogram with an attitude" provide good examples of this process.

Collective Healing

Systemic therapists know well how drastically the therapeutic landscape changes when more people are included in the process. In order to see ourselves clearly and make substantial changes, other people's views and perspectives are essential. This is all the more true when dissecting power and privilege. We are especially unlikely to sustain meaningful changes in our own access to power and privilege without dialogue and feedback. Personal and social liberation occurs most readily when groups of people dialogue together in an effort to make sense of mechanisms of power, privilege, oppression, and dehumanization (Freire, 2003; Martin-Baro, 1994), and as they identify how they can assume a role in social change (Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999). The liberation theology groups in Mexico and South America, and women and men's consciousness raising groups in the 1960s and 1970s are good examples of this process. There indeed is power in people coming together to become more conscious. Consequently, social-justice-based approaches are better served in collective healing environments, particularly those that share a

critical consciousness, where people both support each other and at the same time can be more easily held accountable for sustaining changes. This is difficult to accomplish in individual, couples, or even family counseling. The use of group forms of healing helps to dismantle notions of what is "private" in personal and family life from that which could benefit from being more public. Groups also serve to level power hierarchies between diverse client populations, and to provide a legitimate forum for the perspectives of traditionally subjugated groups (Figuera-McDonough, Netting, & Nichols-Casebolt, 2001). Within multifamily, or community milieus, clients more easily examine gender, class, and other systemic patterns that contribute to their dilemmas. Social education is more often included in the process.

The walls of the therapy room may be further extended by inviting other pertinent persons into the therapeutic process as cultural consultants when appropriate, including community and religious leaders. For example, a liberal-minded priest may be consulted or brought into a session to offer a more inclusive perspective to parents worried about their gay son's access to heaven. The priest in this case is able to offer the parents a perspective in their own religious language that helps them to lovingly accept their child's sexual orientation.

Accountability/Witnessing

Most therapies have no built-in source for holding clients (particularly those who hold more power and privilege, e.g., men) accountable for maintaining attitudinal and behavior changes over time. Sustaining changes in power dynamics is especially difficult. Trustable and conscious feedback systems become even more important. Group approaches, as discussed, are one way to achieve such accountability. Other group members, for example, can remember for each other a partner's past misdeeds or commitments made regarding behavioral changes.

Team approaches also help initiate this accountability. They reduce dependency on any one therapist and provide necessary

feedback to therapists as well as clients. Therapists, of course, also need to be open to being monitored for their lapses in critical consciousness—for sexism, racism, and homophobia, as well as other unconscious misuses of their own power and privilege. Therapies that are structured to allow for sessions to be observed by other team members from behind a one-way mirror (or via a television monitor) provide accountability for therapists (and therefore clients) in session and empower everyone's consciousness raising. The goal of therapeutic accountability is to take pressure off of those clients with less social power (e.g., women) to do all the changing and accommodating, and instead, to place the onus for change on those with more power to change the power hierarchy.

The value of witnesses in the therapeutic context is recognized by others. Reflecting teams (e.g., Hoffman, 1992) and "definitional ceremonies" using outsider witnesses (White, 2007) are examples. This therapeutic structure empowers clients by affording consistent ongoing feedback to challenge misuses of power and privilege directly. It holds clients and professional helpers accountable to the new critical consciousness over time.

Final Thoughts

One premise shared by social justice workers is that therapeutic intervention is a political endeavor, and it involves a process of social critique. Problems between people are created in the sociopolitical arena, not just in the minds or communication patterns of partners. For us to do more than simply reinforce the status quo requires a pointed conscious intention to do otherwise. There is and can be no neutral, nonpolitical stance. At best, we as professional helpers must be committed to a self-reflective appreciation of what values and beliefs we are conveying, because all that we say and do (or fail to say and do) reflects our value stance.

How can we stay mindful of issues of power and privilege in our own lives as well as those lives we influence? Somehow we must get the issues on the table where they can be examined. This is the heart of the work. As mentioned at the outset, raising these issues

is not easy, and resistance to the acknowledgment of their existence can be great. In the words of one of my students, "Wisdom is only found in truth. Who holds the truth? Are we willing to speak our truth?"



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Appendix

Research Participants

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JOURNEYING TOWARD HUMILITY: COMPLEXITIES IN ADVANCING PEDAGOGY FOR THE PRIVILEGED

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This narrative describes the author's journey away from a stance of innocence, toward one of humility in her engagement with pedagogy for the privileged. With deep attention to her identity, the contentious dimensions of this pedagogy have compelled her towards a much more troubled relationship with this practice. The following narrative profiles key contributions of pedagogy for the privileged, and articulates the contentions embedded within. It concludes with three essential ingredients to moderate her privilege: practicing from a stance of humility and "not knowing," advancing research into the practice outcomes of such courses, and accountability structures where communities hold power over classroom practices.

At the close of my dissertation, I wrote: "I continue to be challenged by this form of transformative learning and committed to building its viability and vitality among educators and various sites of educational practice" (Curry-Stevens, 2005, p.418). Similarly, at the close of the first article written about my research, I stated: "I do anticipate that pedagogy for the privileged will likely remain a contested practice in the years to come" (Curry-Stevens, 2007, p.55-56).

While this stance recognized that there were contested dimensions of pedagogy in working with privileged learners, I anticipated that I would remain a steadfast supporter and relatively untouched by turmoil that I expected to surround this practice. In essence, this is a stance of innocence. I perceived that this work was a significant addition to the educator's toolbox, and that it expanded traditional anti-racist and anti-oppression practices, particularly those informed by Freire's (1970) pedagogy. The forte of Freirian pedagogy is the liberation of the oppressed. Its impact is to leave the privileged relatively untouched as their complicity (both intentional and unintentional) and working with privileged learners has remained outside of Freire's work, with the exception of his address of "class suicide" whereby privileged allies can recast themselves with the oppressed by giving up the trappings of class elitism!

Today, pedagogy for the privileged is emerging as an educational form that addresses the privileged dimensions of identities. The seminal anti-oppression works of Dominelli (2002), Mullaly (2002) and Bishop (2002) form its intellectual base, and have been extended by Shera (2003) and Baines (2007). Efforts to articulate the transformations involved for privileged learners has been significant. Models that have been developed explain the process of building white identity and the transformation process of becoming aware of that privilege (Helms, 1995; Tatum, 1994; Hardiman and Jackson, 1997; Curry-Stevens, 2007) and several texts on the role of whites in the process of transformation (Bowser and Hunt, 1996; Kivel, 1996a; Rodriguez and Villaverde, 2000; Fine, Weis, Pruitt & Burns, 2004). The pedagogical dimensions (the "how to teach it" work) is nascent. First initiated by Goodman (2001) in the field of education, social work's attention to anti-oppressive practice (AOP) teaching took a significant leap forward with Van Soest & Garcia (2003). Several social work scholars are now stretching into direct applications of pedagogy, privilege and social work. Contributions are really just beginning, with growing impetus being seen in the contributions of authors such as Jeffrey (2005), Curry-Stevens (2005 & 2007), Walls and colleagues (2009), and Pewewardy (2007) setting the stage for serious dialogue about teaching

privileged learners. The first "Pedagogy of Privilege" conference occurred in June 2009, hosted by the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver and is expected to both catalyze further research and consolidate work done to date.

As someone who helped develop this field through dissertation research, I am aware of both the contentions embedded in it as well as its contributions. How I navigate these tensions has changed greatly since 2005 when I completed my Ph.D. This narrative will trace the path I have taken on this journey out of a stance of innocence and towards one of humility. In the phase of innocence, I will highlight how I emphasized the contributions of pedagogy for the privileged. As illustrated above, I anticipated remaining an untroubled supporter of this pedagogy. As I move towards humility, I will illustrate how renewed focus on its contentions, and my own social location, has caused me to reconsider and reappraise its contributions. As I conclude the paper, I will highlight how I now understand the importance of taking a "not knowing" stance about the value of pedagogy for the privileged, and what this requires of me as an educator.

The core contribution of pedagogy for the privileged is being able to create a classroom environment that more effectively assists privileged learners to undergo needed transformations to unlearn privilege and dominance, and work effectively as allies in anti-oppression struggles (which might include simply getting out of the way). It is an expansion of traditional anti-oppression education that has drawn from Freire's popular education and seeks to increase the skills of educators in working on issues of privilege in the AOP classroom.

The contributions I highlight are twofold: first is the political importance of catalyzing the transformation of people with privilege into becoming allies on struggles for social justice on the features of identity where they hold privilege. The second feature is the centering of these needs in the classroom and the potential outcomes of addressing such needs.

The contentions that arise within pedagogy for the privileged when incorporated into the

AOP classroom are numerous, beginning with the question of whether or not the transformation of privileged learners is a legitimate focus within the AOP classroom and subsequent classroom practices which, at times, can eclipse the focus on oppression. The second flows from the first: how can educators ensure that centering the needs of privileged learners is not an act of complicity with protecting privileged learners? Extending this, how can the relatively privileged faculty members who are building this field be certain the very field itself is not an overly patient indulgence of the defenses of privileged learners? This new field of practice within AOP risks being deeply disrespectful to the existing field, and potentially becomes a bourgeois journey that belies the fact that there are immediate and urgent needs to be addressed while privileged learners take too much time to potentially come to a place where they are ready to become allies. Relying on their voluntary change is precarious, without simultaneously building the profession to be more activist-oriented. At a personal level, I have rejected an untroubled relationship with pedagogy for the privileged, and am no longer suggesting that this is an innocent addition to the educator's toolbox, and notice that I cannot be entrusted with assessing whether such practice is politically savvy or complicity in domination. I have come to understand that the AOP classroom and its instructors must be accountable to those who depend on its success – the communities and its members who rely on the service of our graduates. Concurrently with building external accountability structures must be expanded research into the outcomes of the AOP classroom and a correlated set of concrete practice objectives which are believed necessary to ensure this innovation is not an expanded dalliance in reflexivity but a real force for change. Each of these contributions and contentions will be profiled in turn.

The Political Imperative for Pedagogy for the Privileged

I join with an array of educators and scholars asserting political urgency in pedagogy for the privileged. As agents of oppression

(intentional or by default), privileged people continue to advance dominance, racism, and other forms of oppression. Required is an unlearning of dominance; a process that is volatile and difficult, especially in contrast with becoming aware of oppression because it "literally excavates the ground that [learners] stand on" (Bell and Griffin, 1997, p.50) as they shift from blaming the victims for their own conditions to "naming one's own agent group as the source of oppression as agents" (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, p.26). This can trigger a wide array of defenses and resistance. In order to engage the privileged in anti-oppression efforts, we need to help them unlearn superiority, redefine themselves in more complex and troubled ways, and become allies in undoing racism, white privilege and other systems of domination.

Such practices have been affirmed by numerous leaders in the field, such as bell hooks who advocates for the importance of educating whites to become anti-racist allies:

"White supremacy will not end until racist white people change. Anyone who denies that this change can happen, that one can move from being racist to being actively anti-racist, is acting in collusion with the existing forces of racial domination." (hooks, 2003, p.57)

In Canada, George Sefa Dei (2007) states:

"I think the question of whether whites should talk about racism is a 'no-brainer'... racism can best be addressed when everyone addresses their role in maintaining the status quo... there is a place at the anti-racism table for white scholars. For the dominant, the entry point is the investigation of whiteness and white identity." (p.viii)

Morrow and Torres (2002) profiled the need for a pedagogy of the privileged and suggested that it "remains to be invented" (p.144). Numerous participants in my dissertation research emphasized the imperative to build an effective pedagogy that stretches beyond Freire's contributions and catalyzes privileged learners to adopt ally practices.

Pedagogy for the privileged begins to articulate pedagogical approaches to assist in these transformations. In the context of social work education, we expand beyond traditional arenas of AOP education of axes of oppression covering gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and age, and stretch to include the positional privilege of being a social worker over the lives of clients and communities that one serves. My classroom efforts include a focus on how social workers are embodied with the status of "social worker" holding power over the lives of their clients and communities. While individual social workers include such power, our social work profession frequently enacts social control and legitimates dominant discourses (deMontigny, 1995; Breheny & Stephens, 2007; Lessa, 2006).

If social work educators aim to focus on the multiple sites of oppression and privilege, they become bound to also center the positional privilege of the social work profession. For far too long, social work has configured itself as a site of innocence (Rossiter, 2001). This innocence shows up in many ways: from the early days rooted in an untroubled notion of charity (Baines, 2007), to today's preoccupation with interventions that do not center the social construction of distress (Abramovitz, 1998). Simultaneously, our profession and wider dominant discourse portrays an untroubled notion of social workers as "helpers" which in turn seduces those who enter the profession to adhere to the idea that they are outside of relations of dominance. Illustrating this positioning is the NASW tag line that reads: "Help starts here."

Within schools of social work, there is uneven attention given to the ways power infuses all areas of practice, and so too of teaching. Within most US schools of social

work, AOP advocates are at the margins of their schools, for the dominant "therapeutic" approach rarely centers privilege and oppression as essential to both understanding distress and pathways to alleviate it.

This sense of marginality is rendered more complex because the work "hits home" in ways that are deeply uncomfortable because we implicate our own social work students and ourselves in these relationships of dominance and oppression. While this is a defensible stance, it is an uncomfortable one, as we shine an interrogatory light onto ourselves and our students, and this often stretches into the halls of our institution. Those who thought we could introduce such content and then expect students to only implement this analysis in their external practices have been surprised at the internal consequences. Understanding how relations of dominance are at work simultaneously extends to the social work institutions and the profession itself. The consequence is to trouble the very innocence of the profession, and the scores of "helpers" and "helping organizations" that are now implicated.

Centering the Needs of Privileged Learners in the Classroom

The second contribution is that pedagogy for the privileged has developed key insights into how, specifically, the transformation of privileged learners can be successful. My dissertation research highlighted the needs of privileged learners in the classroom. These needs are understood to include:

- § To be taught about oppression, privilege and a critical analysis of power
- § To be treated as worthy of love and support
- § To be seen as in pain and suffering, despite having privilege and power
- § To have one's suffering recognized and affirmed by both educators and fellow learners
- § To be allowed to have ambivalence about the process
- § To be treated with compassion and sensitivity
- § To be allowed to get this wrong

§ To be gently challenged when acting imperilled or defensive

§ To not make assumptions that their identity is primarily privileged

To accept this list requires that we first accept that these needs are legitimate, and appropriately centered within the classroom. To do so requires that educators believe in the transformative potential of their practice with privileged learners: that not only can they learn about privilege, but that this is a worthwhile anti-oppressive practice. To do so means, for me, that privileged learners are capable of becoming effective allies and that they have a legitimate role in undoing injustice. Despite the fact that they will continue to be implicated in domination (for students cannot change their identities towards being more marginalized, such as non-white or disabled), they are able to make conscious choices about working for change:

"You don't need to dismantle white supremacy or patriarchy all by yourself. What's being made available to you is an opportunity to actually make a choice, moment to moment. You'll fuck up and you'll forget. But it's almost like a meditative and spiritual practice to keep saying, 'this is important enough to me that if I'm having this at the cost of someone else, then I want to make a choice here not to have it or to use it differently.' I think that using it differently would be my mantra around privilege." (Research participant as cited in Curry-Stevens, 2005, p.239)

When educators bring these concepts into the AOP classroom, along with the political imperative of being invested in the transformations of privilege students, there is a pedagogical emphasis on privilege. The task of unlearning dominance serves to develop the capacity of students to understand how their embodied identities influence their capacity for practice. Pedagogy also emphasizes how to rework power relationships towards equity and equality, and build collective power instead of hierarchical power. Such efforts aim to prepare students to implement AOP in their

practicum experiences and their future employment.

The contributions of pedagogy for the privileged are significant. The field provides an array of fruitful approaches that mobilize more efforts for social change. Durable and transformative changes among students are the goal in classroom practices. But such nobility of purpose and effort must now be interrogated.

Innocence Begins to Unravel

The contentions embedded in pedagogy for the privileged are numerous. As I newly examine these contentions, with a willingness to confront my own identity, I reach very different conclusions than those asserted in the earlier part of this paper. At its core, I am more willing to examine my arrogance and how privilege may infuse my understanding and actions. As the reader will see in this text, I am journeying away from innocence and towards both humility and the appreciation that I cannot continue to be entrusted with the AOP classroom without building accountability structures to those who depend on the success of our graduates; a combination of professional and grassroots community members who are invested in the abilities BSW and MSW graduates to enact their privilege differently.

Pedagogy for the privileged risks reinscribing the dominance of privileged students. While it is obvious that the dynamics of privilege and oppression are interdependent and co-constructed, there is a significant letting go of attention on the oppressed dimensions of one's identity, to one of interrogating privilege. This does not mean that accessing privilege is done without reference to oppression. I advocate a pedagogy for the privileged that is entered through student experiences of oppression (Curry-Stevens, 2005 & 2007), but that the political objective that I give primacy to is one of reaching social work students about their embodied privilege, as opposed to their embodied oppression. I advocate a universal construction of privilege, whereby all students are understood to embody privilege albeit to varying degrees, and their embodiment of positional privilege as "social worker." For a discussion of the rationale for

this universal construction, please see Curry-Stevens (2005 & 2007).

The works of Thompson (1999) and Mayo (2004) flag that pedagogy for the privileged can lead to centering the needs of white, male, upper class students. Under these conditions, a privilege-centered pedagogy reinscribes dominance. But if privilege is universally constructed (and all people are understood to embody privilege), then the needs of everyone are centered. It is students' privileged dimensions that are given primacy in learning about oppression and domination. The rationale for such focus is to jolt social workers away from their stance of innocent helpers and to catalyze both personal and political agency to work for change. As agents of privilege, and complicit in inscribing oppression, working with the privileged dimensions of student identities is critically important to advancing social justice.

Implicating myself in this dialogue, I now turn to my own embodied identity and consider my subject location, as a white, upper class, university professor and professional social worker, who is advocating centering privilege in the AOP classroom. What does it mean to stand as a predominantly privileged person and advance pedagogy for the privileged? What does it mean to stand as white, and advocate that the needs of white students be held more central to learning about anti-racism work? While I reach this conclusion as a result of the political importance of assisting in their transformation, it may indeed, as Thompson and Mayo each assert, be an act of dominance. In essence, an anti-oppression lens exposes that I cannot be trusted to ensure that raising the importance of the needs to privileged learners in the classroom is not an act of complicity. I have been reluctant to believe it is complicity, but I, as predominantly privileged, cannot be trusted to interpret this dynamic. I cannot be trusted to assess whether this is a reinscription of dominance, or political savvy. And yet, something within me guides me to continue to want to sustain privileged learners in the classroom – sending them fleeing because their needs were not tended seems a loss and, implicitly, a move that deepens oppression because we have lost the

opportunity of aiming for their transformation and eradicating their resistance to anti-oppression practice.

Complicating the issue of my identity is my positional privilege and the dynamic that continues to besiege whites as anti-racism allies. With my newly minted PhD (in 2005), and a dissertation that focused on pedagogy for the privileged, I slipped into a stance of arrogance as an untroubled ally who asserted that pedagogy for the privileged was a politically savvy extension of AOP. My work on pedagogy for the privileged risks being deeply disrespectful of earlier contributors, and implicitly an act of reinscribing dominance. This is doubly troubling when we notice that these elder bodies are more likely to be people of color. The main leadership within pedagogy for the privileged is white. What this means is that we are repeating a dynamic of suggesting, albeit implicitly, that professionals of color need to step aside for white professionals, and that they are not practicing to acceptable standards, and that they need to be re-schooled by white educators. I believe that we need to preserve space to interrogate pedagogy within the AOP classroom, but when this dynamic slides to one of white educators suggesting to educators of color that they need to learn from us, we have slipped into a dynamic that reinscribes dominance. Privileged educators need to understand the multiplicity of ways in which we fail to understand oppression and dominance, and how we remain truly invested in our dominance. Jeffrey's work (2005) provides an analysis of the influence of identity and subjectivities in navigating the anti-racist classroom, and provides impetus to reject spaces of knowing on multiple social work fronts, framing this as a paradox of the profession. While I found (and even sought) the path to being a groundbreaking scholar, I was seeking recognition and appreciation for being exemplary, and this allowed me to hold the stance as an "exceptional" white, who distinguished themselves from others in the field. The fact that I found it, and reaped benefits from the work, likely says more about my privilege and my ability to exploit the knowledge of others than it does about my merit.

Pedagogy for the privileged has the appeal of a shiny new penny, promising much and gaining the spotlight within the field of anti-oppression and anti-racism practice. This shiny new penny serves to undermine the contributions of older initiatives and sensibilities that are borne of anti-oppression and anti-racism education. To amplify this dynamic, I share a brief story. When invited to present my work in an education policy panel at the 2008 Canadian Race Relations Foundation's conference, I proudly sat at the table of presenters, and was honored to be introduced by Zanana Akande, Canada's first black female cabinet minister in Ontario. At the close of this session, she shared her thoughts with me about my work. She said, "But our children are waiting;" and did this research not suggest that existing anti-racism educators needed to be re-schooled in a new paradigm and approach? At the time, I remained invested in my stature as one who was sharing the leadership in advancing a new approach that would be more successful and did not contemplate this more. Now, however, I see that this work is implicitly disrespectful, especially as it does suggest that cadres of educators need to be newly educated in pedagogy for the privileged.

Our children are indeed waiting; deeply invested in a society that will rid them of racism and other forms of oppression. Notice, however, that not all children are waiting equally as some lives are violated at their core by these dynamics while others pass and are even given "passports" (McIntosh, 1988) to aid their journey. Many are waiting for an end to damaging disproportionality in many systems, and waiting for an end to dominant discourses that render them with less access to resources and lowered expectations for achievement, and significant marginalizing of their claims to society's resources. The waiting game has gone on too long – and pedagogy for the privileged risks adding another inning in this game.

As I try to reconcile these positionalities, I now embrace the possibility that I am enacting dominance. My personal goal is to remain in the lively space that considers both that pedagogy for the privileged is politically

savvy and that it is a mechanism for me to distinguish myself as an “exceptional” ally who obscures the dangers of her praxis. Both of these interpretations are possible.

And yet, this does not seem to go far enough.

Pedagogy for the privileged (and, indeed, most AOP education) has heavy reliance on reflexivity for its success. Taking time and its forgone opportunity costs (of doing something else that might have more impact on the community) is itself a privilege. We need to balance urgency with introspection. And notice that the latter precludes the former – if a culture of introspection (especially one in the privacy of one’s office or home) is advanced, then the urgency is likely to diminish. Taking the time to do this well is one that renders it, as suggested by McWhinney, a “liberal dalliance” (personal communication, 2005). Kinchenloe and Steinberg (1998) hold a similarly dim interpretation of the prognosis of relying on the patient transformation of the privileged to create change: “The need for change is immediate and people of color do not have time to wait for whites to take some slow, bourgeois journey of white discovery” (as cited in Allen, 2004, p.133). When we consider whose bodies are likely to hold more urgency for action, we must notice that more oppressed bodies will be likely to be more impatient in expecting practice to improve. This taps into earlier dynamics whereby privileged bodies are not logical leaders in action and nor should they be the arbiters of outcomes and classroom practices.

The AOP classroom really serves to focus student efforts at the personal arena, and while important, does risk leaving students there. It is essential that AOP practice not be reduced to one of contemplating identity. While introspection is important, change must be framed in two ways: the first is that awareness must be tied to action (for changed awareness is not enough for change to be achieved) and the second is that the personal arena of change must be supplemented by learning about and building confidence about working for change in the structural, institutional and ideological arenas.

Both AOP and pedagogy for the privileged implicitly suggests that we can persuade privileged social workers to become allies and advocates. This recruitment is voluntary; for while courses might be mandatory, the transformations they might manifest are voluntary. We then rely on the voluntary action of the newly transformed to achieve change. Implicitly, this can suggest that the pressure tactics of social movements and their campaigns is irrelevant. This was never the intention of pedagogy for the privileged – but it can suggest that changes can be catalyzed through voluntary shifts in perspective, instead of pressure politics. We need to preclude the possibility of this dichotomy and instead assert that change is required at both ends. We simultaneously need change strategies in the structural (policy), institutional, ideological and behavioral arenas, and need to ensure that social action is legitimated within schools of social work. Undue reliance on voluntary transformative change is indeed “undue,” and it must be balanced by building the strength and vitality of social movements and campaigns that use pressure politics to advance change. Similarly, we need effective practitioners within organizations to change policies, practices and discourses. It is time for occupational segregation to end, glass ceilings to be broken, and the gatekeepers of dominant traditions and cultures to permanently step aside. We must prepare social workers to be effectively engaged and invested in change at all levels.

I am coming to appreciate my inability to hold myself accountable for practices in the AOP classroom. Relying on my voluntary actions, even if in concert with an array of other instructors in the area, is not enough. I now embrace that we need a structural shift, one that is akin to Law’s (2000) “partnership accountability process” or Kivel’s (1996b) accountability practices for educators but that takes it much further. I now recommend that we pilot structures within academic settings that place authority over course selection, course objectives, and even pedagogy in the hands of communities of practitioners and their grassroots membership who depend on our institution’s ability to graduate effective AOP

practitioners. Instructors should be required to meet with these bodies and be accountable for what occurs in the classroom. This body should have significant authority over course structures, objectives and pedagogical dimensions. Essentially, our privileged identity (institutionally, positionally, and by social location) makes us structurally unsound as leaders in the field.

If I continue to hold myself accountable to my students and to the tenure & promotion committee, and don't extend beyond this limit, then I have not walked my role as an ally with integrity. And that absence of integrity is one that is borne of my privilege. If I don't have an embodied experience whereby the fibers and neurons in my body resist and scream in the face of oppression and privilege, then I am an unreliable ally. I have reinscribed privilege if I let our field off the hook. I pride myself as someone who advocates for accountability structures throughout our profession – espousing that organizations be accountable to their communities in real ways, and for communities to hold bureaucracies accountable when outcomes such as disproportionality are identified. I now see how my privilege has let me accept inadequate accountability structures. Instead, successful accountability practices need to be rooted institutionally within bodies that have the lived experiences of oppression and who have durable commitments to its eradication. It is within those communities that the imperative for change is urgent, for they hold the investments in the future of their children who are waiting for an end to racism and other forms of oppression. They should hold the power to enforce change.

Tokenistic accountability must be avoided (Arnstein, 1969). When marginalized populations are consulted and placated (by protestations that those in power are “doing the right thing”), we are asked to notice that those in power continue to hold the right to decide where and how such input is gathered. Those invited to the table can be uninvited – a condition that renders their voice and influence implicitly contingent on not “rocking the boat.” Instead, real power among the marginalized can only occur when they have control and

authority. Such is the challenge of the AOP classroom. While AOP seeks to rectify unjust power relations, the AOP classroom and its institutional dimensions (as located in a higher education classroom) effectively ignores the most marginalized, resulting in tokenistic deference to the needs of those with little power. I have come to understand that these accountability practices are where the “rubber hits the road” and offer those who hold significant power and authority choices that illustrate our commitments to truly transformative practices. We are challenged to go beyond paying lip service to real change, and tokenistic involvement that leaves us with the power to decide who is at the table. What are methods that truly provide marginalized groups power and influence to demand social change?

Concurrent with excitement about such accountability is fear. What would it really look like to be accountable to an external body for what happens in my classrooms? Institutionally this is the role for curriculum committees and tenure and promotion committees. Notice, however, that the power here remains with similarly privileged bodies, particularly elders among us who have been schooled prior to the advent of anti-oppression courses and theories. I perceive that these existing institutional bodies will become an intermediate step with expanded influence over pedagogical practices. Our core task is, however, to find structures through which real power is placed in the hands of those who depend on our graduates for the services they will deliver.

At the same time, faculty need to understand the transformations that occur in the classroom, and to begin to articulate the ways in which practice skills are expected to be influenced by AOP. The researchers among us need to figure out how to track the impact of these transformations and other impacts of the AOP classroom. Does it lead to the development of an altered body of practitioners, who are able to spot and reform organizational practices that are racist and otherwise oppressive? Does it lead to the development of better partnership practices among communities of color? With the homeless? Does it lead to advocacy activities

in the policy arena? Within political arenas where decision makers allocate resources and decide how to advance the inclusion of marginalized communities in urban areas? And does it lead our profession to hold itself accountable as a social movement in anti-oppression struggles? I announce an intention to embark on this journey and to build community accountability practices in my own classrooms over the next few years. Notice again, however, that until the profession has configured itself to be accountable to communities where we practice that such efforts are voluntary and thus precarious, even dangerous, commitments.

Without such accountability, the AOP classroom risks becoming the dalliance that McWhinney foreshadowed. Continuing to hold our privileged bodies as the arbiters of concrete outcomes risks letting AOP feel better about ourselves, as we proclaim ourselves allies. The AOP classroom is poised to become an act of dominance that allows privileged educators to strengthen our resumes (both ours and our student graduates) as "anti-oppressive" and we become likely to slide into complacency. We all know of the possibilities that we can have better analysis but not doing anything differently. We are reminded by Lopes and Thomas (2006) that "good white resumes don't trickle down."

The stance I held of an untroubled advocate of pedagogy for the privileged was a dangerous one. Complacency complicity and the reproduction of dominance are its likely consequences. While I still hold that there is a political imperative in reaching privileged learners, I now embrace a "not knowing" stance that such practice may create an oppressive experience for those with more marginalized identities. I certainly embrace that I cannot be trusted to enact durable and consistent classroom practices that address all forms of dominance due to my privileged identity.

Drawing from the works of Tervalon & Murray-Garcia (1998) and Dean (2001) on "cultural humility," much harm is done by embracing the "expert" and "mastery" dimensions of the concept of "cultural competence" that has taken firm root in social

work over the last decade. Cultural knowledge is ripe with stereotyping, as social workers are encouraged to "know" the other in ways outside of their direct engagement (Rodriguez & Walls, 2000). While pedagogy for the privileged may hold political savvy and may eventually be upheld by communities to which I advocate we must be accountable, my stance as an innocent educator and researcher must be rejected. Any privileged body, even those who work in dedicated ways towards being an ally, building expertise about the "other" is ripe with arrogance and error. Simultaneously, the assumption that the core relational task is knowing and understanding the "other" is primed with potential to ignore the substantial power differences that exist between social worker and client/consumer/community. Tervalon & Murray-Garcia implicate both dimensions of injustice in the notion of cultural competence, and instead advance humility.

Conclusion

Where now do I stand? I must hold out possibility, indeed likelihood, that my embrace of pedagogy for the privileged is a defense mechanism to define a role for a privileged white woman in anti-oppression practice. It likely says "make a role for me," and "see me as an ally." but I now reject the space that positions me as an untroubled advocate, and embrace that I am likely a "dangerous ally" (Lopes & Thomas, 2006, p.225) to marginalized communities. I now have gained enough humility to interrogate my own praxis, and recognize the value of being suspicious, while rejecting that space of innocence. I simultaneously hold that I cannot be entrusted with this reflexivity and external accountability structures are required for the integrity of AOP education, for the profession to maintain integrity in advancing AOP, and for the advancement of social justice.

My conclusion is that "I don't know" about the vitality and value of this practice. Holding this space is the best way I know to practice social work education, and indeed social work as a whole. I have spent the last few years working with students to embrace the contradictions and ambiguities in practice and to be willing to not know (and indeed never

know) a space of innocence for themselves – or a surety that they are doing good and not re-inscribing dominant power relationships. Living in the contradictions, complexities and ambiguities is the ethos I commit to. I have to consider that pedagogy for the privileged may be an act of trespass, albeit dressed up or even cloaked as political strategy for advancing the field. I know that social work always contains elements of trespass (Rossiter, 2001). I now come to appreciate that there will never be clarity about pedagogy for the privileged. It will, and indeed must, stand in a place of contradictions and values dilemmas. I have stepped off my soapbox. I look forward to being alive in this space with students and colleagues, and embrace practice ripe with ambiguities, contradictions, and most importantly, humility. The best I can do now is say “I don’t know” and while a part of me yearns for reconciliation and movement towards certainty, a deeper and more wise self knows that embracing a “not knowing” stance is as much certainty as the field is warranted in offering.

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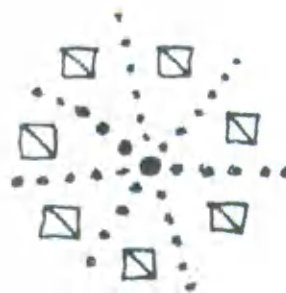
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(Endnotes)

¹ Please note that Freire's analysis thoroughly implicates the privileged, but his pedagogical work (what has become known



as "popular education") addresses only the oppressed.

² I acknowledge the powerful way Laura Nissen (personal communication, April 29, 2009) has punctuated the importance of this term. She holds it discursively framing it as a form of resistant discourse and introducing a playful notion of how "troubling" can appeal to the rebel in each of us. This discursive use of the term supports the concrete need for social workers to trouble complacency and complicity.

³ Please note that I, like the reader, am inclined to add qualifiers to each element such as, on the last item: "...although privileged dimensions of one's identity are appropriately centered in the classroom." I maintain attention to the subject, not its qualifiers as this will dilute my intention.

USE OF CONTEXT/USE OF SELF: PRIVILEGE AND MARGINALIZATION AS CATALYSTS FOR GROWTH IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

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The following narrative describes the author's thoughts and experiences relating to the belief that through understanding and using experiences of privilege and oppression, we make better use of "self" in social work education and practice. The author's belief is that privilege and oppression operate as interwoven factors and are closely linked in our constructions of personal and professional identities. Balancing openness and challenge, thinking on our feet and being opportunistic practitioners and teachers, and bearing witness while battling privilege with privilege are some of the strategies he applies.

I am a middle-aged man, gay Caucasian, politically and spiritually liberal, educated, Southern, and from a relatively privileged, suburban, middle-class background. The majority of the students I teach in social work courses are straight, African American or Caucasian (about 50/50), politically and religiously conservative, nearly exclusively Christian-identified, young women from a variety of backgrounds, many being first generation college students from small towns and rural areas in South Carolina. It would seem that I have little in common with my students; in fact, glancing at the lists and labels above, our Southern upbringing might be the extent of our familiarity.

Yet I have grown to learn and appreciate that I share the commonality with my students of living our privileged and marginalized selves every day, and through our relationships I hope that we may become more aware of how these contextual experiences may work to shape our practice as social workers. I believe that privilege and oppression operate as interwoven factors and are closely linked in our constructions of personal and professional identities as well as our ability to apply the use of self as social work practitioners. Bringing forth an awareness of the importance of recognizing our own context and its constant interplay with that of those we serve in the activity of practice is one of my primary goals as a social work educator and practitioner.

When I was an MSW student at the University of Nevada, Reno in the mid-1990s, I had what I might now identify as an early experience of thinking about the contextual and interwoven relationship of privilege and oppression in my life. After watching clips from the series *Eyes on the Prize*, about the African American Civil Rights Movement, I was a little taken aback when my classmates, who were nearly all Caucasians from the West, made several disparaging comments about white Southerners and how racist "they" were and continue to be. Having lived in Reno for more than a year at this point, I suggested that although there were relatively few African Americans in the city I had noticed oppression of other groups, including Latinos and Native Americans. My colleagues quickly shot back that it wasn't the same thing; it wasn't nearly as bad.

I felt discouraged that my point was missed, but then a lone voice in our cohort spoke up and said something to the effect that it was surely the same thing. It may be more subtle around here, she said, but oppression is oppression and the privileged and the oppressed each reap results on some level. This colleague was the only African American in our group; a woman from the South who was about my age and had grown up in Alabama as I was growing up in Tennessee. Unlike our classmates, she and I had already seen *Eyes on the Prize* several times back

home, within the context of being a part of the first generation of Southerners to grow up in the post-segregation South.

My colleague and I went on to say how in some ways we had more in common with one another than we had with our other classmates, and it was through the privilege of education and exposure to diversity that we had this awareness. We talked about the shared perception that we seemed to have a different, more complex, understanding of the events and evolving results of the Civil Rights Movement than did our fellow students, based on our Southern context, even though (perhaps, because) we were of a generation removed from the height of the struggle. This complex understanding included thinking about the interconnections among the experiences of poor whites and blacks, for example, before, during, and after the apex of the Movement; interconnections that continue to be frayed and sometimes exploited today.

The shared context, although overlapping for Southern blacks and whites in admittedly—sometimes limited or at the least, painful, ways, gave my colleague and I the opportunity to connect with one another, and to educate our group of fellow students. That a black woman and a white man from the South could experience a contextual relationship and draw contemporary meaning from the Civil Rights Movement was a startling and challenging experience for our classmates. This element of surprise may have made it all the more powerful for them as they reflected on their own contexts and assumptions regarding the meanings we all create about race-based oppression and privilege.

After completing my MSW degree, I returned home to the South to work first as a child welfare worker and then as an in-home therapist with runaway adolescents and their families in the mountains of North Carolina. Like many other social workers, I often fielded questions related to my apparent greenness and lack of having had the experience of raising children myself. I also sensed suspicion on the part of clients who thought I might be “book smart” but wondered about my common sense. After all, what self-respecting white male (with all the privileges afforded to him) would

spend so much time in school to do such low status work with little pay?

In addition, although I didn't make it a point to disclose my sexual identity to my clients, I worried that it might further limit my perceived ability to relate to them, given the fact that they were often marginalized themselves, uneducated, and had inaccurate and stereotypical views of gay people. Clearly I had some fears and assumptions about the relationships I would encounter as a new social worker in the field.

My fears were eased as I realized that there were many ways I connected with clients, and it still seems to me that people will naturally look for points of connection, if given the opportunity, and if approached in a respectful and open manner. The fact that I was a native North Carolinian was a door opener for me on several occasions and I used this commonality as a “way in” with many families. The status of being a white male also afforded me authority on some level, no matter my sexual identity. Although I sometimes had to think on my feet to realize what I could use to gain entry into the lives of clients, I used the opportunities afforded me by connection and by privilege as best I could.

After five years in the field, I decided to pursue a doctorate and focus on teaching and scholarship. As a doctoral student, I created an opportunity to develop a course on social work practice with lesbian, gay bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) populations as part of a teaching practicum at the University of South Carolina (USC), supervised by a faculty member who later served on my dissertation committee. I developed the course under an already existing course title, “Sexuality Issues in Social Work Practice,” which was previously taught with a focus on the basics of sexuality education. Using the same course title, yet understanding that I was significantly altering the course focus, I rewrote the description and objectives and developed the first elective in the College of Social Work at USC to address LGBT issues systematically over a full term. The course was successful among MSW students, and students from other graduate programs also took it as an elective.

I ended up teaching the course several times, always with good numbers and evaluations.¹

The revamped version of *Sexuality Issues in Social Work Practice* did not exist without controversy – not originating from the students, but from my teaching colleagues. Mid-way through the first semester I taught the course, I was made aware that some members of the faculty were deeply concerned about what was going on in my classroom. One objected to my use of the word “queer” in the syllabus, and, more disturbingly to me, questioned how such a topic could sustain a semester course. Fortunately, after I approached the Dean to defend the course, the controversy subsided, presumably squelched from the top. I cannot help but believe that my privileged status as a white male and a Southerner helped me to develop, deliver, and defend that course at that particular place at that particular time. Further on a continuum of gendered expressions of masculinity and femininity, I would place myself somewhere in the middle rather than on the feminine side of the scale; this may or may not have contributed to my accomplishment, as well. The devaluation of femininity in general and feminine gender expression in some gay men in particular is largely overlooked and little discussed, but constantly working, under the surface, in social work settings as in our larger culture.

Although students responded quite positively to the overall experience of the LGBT course, I found myself astonished by the comments they would make in class, mainly regarding what I thought were outdated stereotypes about lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people. After all, I was an openly gay instructor and they were saying these things unabashedly and right to my face. I had the mixed reaction of feeling deeply offended on one level, and I thought about how inappropriate these comments would seem to the students if they were being said about another group of people like women or African Americans. On the other hand, I thought, obviously they feel comfortable enough in the safety we created together in class to air their assumptions and misinformation, and that safety might lend itself to the possibility of growth and change. Or was it that they felt

comfort in their privilege to speak out derisively about LGBT people, as was common in their contexts?

Interestingly, in all the times I taught the course I only remember one openly gay student. I always worried that the offensive comments would be painful for LGBT students in the class, especially if they were newly self-identified and/or in the early processes of coming out. Of course, I did consider that there were LGBT students who did not out themselves to the group, and I tried to create, with the students, some basic ground rules of respect, maintaining both an atmosphere of openness to express assumptions and ask questions, while also making certain to challenge misinformation.

I believe my success in teaching the course was largely due to encouraging openness and respect for talking about issues that were, from the context of the majority of the students, sensitive, controversial, and greatly misunderstood. I learned that they had never had the opportunity to discuss such things before: not with peers, not at home, and not in educational or religious settings. This stifling effect reenacts and reinforces oppressive attitudes and ideas and it is only when safe space is present for the free expression of context and assumptions that new ones may be developed through challenge. I believe I used my own personal contexts of both privilege and marginalization to co-create, with the students, classroom experiences that led to their often reported realignment of assumptions and shifting of contextual understandings regarding LGBT people.

In addition to developing and teaching the LGBT course at USC, I began to speak in the community about LGBT issues, and LGBT youth in particular, and I continue to do so as part of academic service. I have given several invited talks to groups of school teachers, administrators, and counselors; as well as school resource officers, church groups, and groups of students in teacher education. Without exception, my ideas and the material I present have been attacked, ridiculed, and zealously debated at these events, sometimes by one participant, often by a small group. One example is from a statewide school resource

officer conference where I, along with an MSW student, presented information about working with LGBT youth. One attendee remarked that young people were just like a dog: "If the dog does wrong, you beat it out of him. This is just wrong." He wasn't kidding, and several other attendees nodded and commented in agreement.

In educating and advocating about LGBT youth issues in the community I feel like I am using my privilege—as an educated person, who doesn't appear to be "too radical," or "too gay," who is a native Southerner and with the status of working at a University—to bear witness. I bear witness about the ongoing plight of young people who are still routinely harassed and bullied, thrown out of their homes, and often are not supported and protected by the adults in their lives who are supposed to be there to do just that. I use my privilege to battle the privilege that is often afforded the uneducated to espouse misinformation in the time and place I live.

Teaching the LGBT course, speaking in the community about LGBT youth, and leading class discussions about LGBT topics in HBSE, practice, and policy classes I teach today does not come without personal costs. Often after such engagements I feel physically and emotionally drained. I question why I put myself in the position to be offended and disheartened, again and again, and it is frustrating to see how such horrible attitudes and beliefs persist amongst my students. These same beliefs and attitudes seem to be even more entrenched among youth-serving professionals in the community who are working with young people, every day.

I sometimes wonder if I have created a situation where I relive the pain of my own developmental process continually. I wonder why, at times, I have chosen a path that has led me to work in one of the most conservative and repressive states in the country, and to focus part of my professional life on issues that cause such strain and sometimes outright disdain from those I meet in my work in the community and the classroom.

The strain and disdain I refer to comes largely from the fundamentalist religious influence in this region of the country, and

another struggle for me is the claim by many of my conservative, Christian-identified students that the social work education process marginalizes and oppresses them. While attempting to provide an open and safe space to allow students to be frank about their assumptions and experiences, I also work to help them identify the contextual privilege of Christianity in our region and country, and I emphasize that social work is driven by values such as a focus on the dignity and worth of the person to determine his or her own journey. In other words, it's not really about *you*, I try to explain. Of course, it is about *all of us*, too, as self-aware practitioners and educators; it's just that the focus of practice and education is service to others. Again, I believe it is the interweaving of my own contextual experiences of privilege and marginalization that allow me to try to strike a balance between being open and being challenging.

I am still working to understand and hold at the same time together the inherent tension between my privileged and marginalized experiences and to translate this understanding into the ability to effectively employ use of self as a social work practitioner and educator. I'm also experimenting with how to engage students in the examination of their own privileged and marginalized selves so that they may begin to think about how they will incorporate these interwoven experiences, and use them to effectively engage with others in practice.

For me, on better days, I hold strongly to the belief that in my teaching and community service I am doing good and important work and that the work may be meaningful to me and others, not despite the fact that I live in such a conventional environment but because of it. I have lived in more progressive areas of the country and find it is not a good fit for me. Since I was a child I have felt "up against it" in terms of challenging the conventional while remaining connected to place and people. I love the South and refuse to be run off from it. The struggle for me is to pay attention to take care of myself as I continue to shape and give meaning to my context, as that context constantly shifts and changes based on my

relationships with students and community members I encounter in my professional roles.

The contextual use of self in social work has a long history of discussion and description. For example, in *Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work*, Bertha Capen Reynolds (1942/1985) traces the development of social work from an authoritative and moralistic enterprise to a scientific yet relativistic endeavor that seeks to understand individuals in the context of their environments instead of prescribing blanket answers. Reynolds positions client self-determination and the professional use of self in a mutually enriching relationship between worker and client as primary aims.

Similar dynamics occur in the social work classroom. Reynolds (1942/1985, p. 25) acknowledges that most education (along with most "social work") occurs outside the teaching (practice) influence. Any growth or learning in education or in practice takes place because of a fundamental respect for people and a commitment to human relationship, "by virtue of adding our presence and intelligence to what is already there."

While a relational view of the use of self in practice is often centered in discussions of clinical practice (e.g., Arnd-Caddigan & Pozzuto, 2008; Reupert, 2007), context and relationship play a critical role in all social work interventions. Kondrat (1999) describes the importance for social workers to recognize the influence of our encounters with all kinds of social institutions and the multitude of personal and professional relationships we experience as the formational context of the perceptions and knowledge we bring to practice. Developing an understanding of the selves we are and how we interconnect with all those we serve, in every setting, is a significant aspiration in social work education and practice. Recognizing aspects of privilege and oppression in our experiences and how these may be used in practice and education contributes greatly to this developing understanding.

Engaging students in examining and making meaning of their privileged and marginalized selves and incorporating those meanings into use of self in practice is a

continuing journey. I see myself as an opportunistic teacher, looking for teaching moments when we may go off on a bit of a tangent, but we are going deeper, too.

For example, in recent class discussions two students shared their views of how privilege and oppression are interconnected in their developing professional lives. One student from a poor coastal community said that she was planning to use the privilege of her social work education and developing understanding of various social systems to return home after completing her master's degree, and work for change in the schools she herself attended. She shared a heartfelt story of how students from her high school, along with their families and communities, are routinely insulted and discounted in school district discussions regarding funding priorities and school consolidation issues. Another young woman, who identifies as Christian and an LGBT advocate, reported a recent event at the teen health-focused agency where she works when staff invited an LGBT youth organization to conduct training with volunteers so that they may better understand and serve young LGBT people. Some of the volunteers, older women with Christian backgrounds, shared their feelings of discomfort with the topic with my student. She talked about using her privilege as a Christian with a respectable reputation in the faith community to address the volunteers' concerns from both a human rights and a spiritual perspective in an attempt to break down labels and see the people underneath. Both students will face challenges and opportunities as they continue to integrate their privileged and marginalized selves.

Experiences and meanings of privilege and oppression are contextual, interwoven, and cannot be easily taken apart as separate and independent phenomena. In social work practice and education we can work to pay attention to how we interpret and use our contextual selves in our work as practitioners and teachers, and how we may better help students develop a more integrated use of self in their work with others, drawing on their own contextual "selves."



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(Footnotes)

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PRIVILEGE THROUGH THE LENS OF EMPATHY

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Teaching students about privilege is a challenge. In this narrative, the authors describe how they came to understand privilege. When they experienced the vividness of a book or the actual life of another, the neural pathways that mediate empathy were stimulated. These profound empathic moments helped them to understand privilege, and can be simulated in the classroom to help students to understand privilege as well.

Over our years of teaching, a few significant challenges surface repeatedly. One of the most difficult to address is teaching students about privilege. Providing a formal definition is relatively easy. We can intellectually talk about privilege as an advantage or right belonging to a person simply by virtue of his or her birthright: being born into a certain class, race, ethnicity, gender, or other station in life. Social work students tend to nod their heads in agreement. However, raise the idea in the classroom that we have privilege, and that the privilege plays a role in the oppression of others, and agreement begins to disappear.

As middle-aged women who remember the struggle for women's rights, we don't feel particularly privileged because we experience marginalization based on our gender. We have had to prove ourselves in academia because we are women. But we are also white, and we have gone through life with the color of skin that matched the dominant and preferred majority race in this country. We have that advantage. Additionally, we each have numerous other identities that place us among the dominant culture, being heterosexual or Christian for example, or that place us among those who are in the minority, such as being lesbian or Jewish. Our experiences are shared by most people; we experience a combination of privilege and disadvantage. Privileges cut across all areas of life, through race, gender, and sexual identity, as well as through class, ethnicity, physicality, family of birth, and numerous other characteristics that may have nothing to do with achievement and

accomplishment. We understand our students' reluctance to acknowledge that they may have reached their current status as university students at least in part through the benefit of privilege. So over the years of trying to help students learn about privilege, we have asked ourselves two questions. The first relates to understanding the mechanisms of our own experience:

1.) How did we ourselves come to understand the power of privilege even though we share many types of privilege? How did we get to a point where we can see that privilege, acknowledge it, and take action toward equality?

The second question relates to using our experiences to contribute to student learning:

2.) How do we convey that understanding to our students, who may initially reject the idea that they personally may have privilege?

Liz Remembers:

It was only a book, required reading for an English class when I was 14 years old. The book was *Black Like Me*, the account of John Howard Griffin, a white journalist who darkened his skin and spent 6 weeks traveling through the South as an African American man. Reading that book had the most profound impact on me then, and has stayed etched in my memory for almost 40 years. It was the first time I remember feeling outrage at social injustice because I resonated with the agony and fear of hatred and discrimination that the author experienced. For the first time that I can recall, I began to understand the social

injustice that was a consequence of the privilege I had, the privilege of being white.

I grew up in middle class America in an almost all white world of home, school, synagogue, and summer camp. My family was active in the Civil Rights Movement. I even heard Martin Luther King speak twice, including his famous speech on the Mall in Washington, DC in August of 1963. But until I read *Black Like Me*, I don't think I got it; I began to see the connection between racism and white privilege. I have no recollection of any class discussion, activities, or writing that might have gone with the reading assignment. But I do remember vividly the book and its effect on me.

Karen Remembers:

When I was 21 and volunteering in Taiwan, coming home from work one day I noticed a very elderly woman with a heavy load on her bicycle. She was pushing her bike rather than riding it. She was struggling to keep the bike upright. Instinctively, I ran to catch up with her and gestured that I could push the bike for her. She spoke Taiwanese and I only spoke Mandarin Chinese so we could not really communicate through words. But her eyes and her smile were surprised and grateful, and she willingly let me take her load. It took us about 10 to 15 minutes to reach her home.

While we were walking, my mind was flooded with thoughts and feelings: "What would it be like to be 80 years old and still have to ride your bike to the market each day? And then push heavy loads home? What work was there still for her to do once she reached her house?" Her body was bent; her face was weathered and old; but her eyes were beautiful and filled with dignity and strength. As we walked side by side, I was overwhelmed with deep feelings of love for this woman. I did not know her, but in those minutes I felt like I had a brief glimpse into her life. I too was staggering under the heavy load on her bike. The more I exerted myself, the more I felt an overwhelming loneliness. The more my body bent in an effort to keep the bike upright, the more I realized how remarkably strong my companion had to be to survive, both physically and mentally

I would only understand years later that I was hard wired, as we all are, to think and feel things that were similar to what she might have been thinking and feeling as I saw her pushing her bike along, and even more so as I actually "walked in her shoes" and pushed the same bike she was pushing. I was 21, a very naïve, idealistic Christian American who had gone to private schools, and learned to drive and had access to a car when I was 16. What could my privileged self possibly understand about a hard-working, 80 year old Buddhist, Taiwanese woman living on the edge of poverty?

Layne Remembers:

I nervously anticipated the first day of my BSW field placement at a large state psychiatric facility. I grew up in a family where secrecy surrounded my grandfather's 30-year residence in the psychiatric ward of a Veteran's Administration hospital. My great-grandfather committed suicide. I sought out educational experiences to help me understand why some family members developed mental health conditions and others did not. The unit psychologist kindly offered a tour of the adolescent ward to which I was assigned. Upon meeting a young male resident in the hallway, the psychologist introduced me as a newly admitted resident of the unit. Shocked, I knew I had to speak up but was unsure how to proceed. The psychologist's unethical "joke" clearly defined the divide between "us"—the privileged staff—and "them"—the powerless "patients" as they were then called. I felt strongly that the young man could easily be a member of my own family and to respond too vehemently would be stigmatizing. I don't remember my exact words, but I stepped forward, introduced myself as the new social work intern, and shook his hand. Upon reflection, I felt the older male psychologist's privilege allowed him to feel it was acceptable to make a joke at the expense of a young, female intern, and to further use a powerless patient to do so. Yet I was privileged enough to have the power to set the record straight. I couldn't help but wonder: what would it be like to have mental health symptoms so severe that one had to be hospitalized and be treated

so disrespectfully by a professional staff member?

Maria Remembers:

I was excited about my first day as a student intern in a school in the South Bronx. Upon arrival in the parking lot, I was chased by packs of dogs and encountered a few homeless men as I walked the short distance to the school building. I was thankful to arrive safely. I was shocked when my assigned teacher announced to me that the students were “unteachable.” As I observed the children, I paid attention to their faces and body language; it seemed like fear and sadness emanated from them. I was struck by their worn out clothes. At snack time, they swarmed around the snack table, grabbing at every crumb. I asked my teacher to give me the eight most “difficult” students she had. She seemed relieved to pass on the responsibility. Every day I took my group of students to a small section of the classroom and listened to their stories before we ever took a pencil to paper to begin the classwork. Many of them shared that they had no food to eat at home; a few of them had been physically and/or sexually abused. All of them walked to school alone in fear of crossing the large intersections.

My world was so very different. I had food, love, and enough money to live a happy and secure life. How could I possibly understand their struggles? My ability to be completely present with acceptance for my students helped me to imagine what it was like to be them. Regardless, at the end of the day I could return to my privileged life wondering what traumas I would hear about the next day.

I was not convinced that they could not learn. In spite of their neglect and trauma, I listened to their stories without judgment, bringing in food to satisfy their hunger and offering my unconditional love. I asked my mentor if I could give my students a more advanced math test. She said she appreciated my enthusiasm, but was certain that the children would fail. I did it anyway. Much to her surprise, they passed with flying colors. For a moment the sadness in their eyes melted and was replaced by a twinkle of pride and

joy. The experience had a deep impact on me. The eyes of my students in the Bronx are embedded in my memory forever

Our stories demonstrate that our experiences—whether the vividness of a book or the actual life of another—fostered experiences of empathy, which our minds began to process. We took those experiences and the consciousness cognitively processed through the lens of empathy into our work as social workers. These empathic moments laid a foundation to help us start to understand privilege.

What Is Privilege?

Using the simplest definition, privilege is an unearned advantage. It is that extra benefit gained by virtue of who we are, not what we have done. For example, we were all born into white, middle class families in the United States; the Taiwanese woman Karen met and the children Maria taught were born into poverty. A random accident of birth placed us in economically and racially privileged groups even while we were still in the womb. The reality that we did nothing to earn this privilege can be very disturbing, especially when we start to realize that others who don't share that privilege see us as privileged. “I worked hard to get where I am” is often our response to the idea of privilege, with each person's definition of how they worked hard as varied as those who are defining it.

Having privileged access to the benefits in society is usually not a matter of having good luck or of being fortunate. Neither is privilege solely a matter of personal effort. Routine privilege is largely due to our membership in elite class, race, and gender groups that enjoy unshared power in our society... unearned benefits come when our group has the power to increase the social burden on other groups (Hobgood, 2000, p. 3).

Often, when we critically assess our life accomplishments, we have to acknowledge that there is a mix of hard work and unearned advantage.

Privilege and Social Justice

The impact of privilege goes beyond the individual. Ethicist Mary Elizabeth Hobgood (2000), whose definition of privilege we cite above, argues that our humanity is diminished by unfairness and that those who are privileged have a moral imperative, as well as self benefit, from working to dismantle privilege. She sees privilege as a social construction that can be changed. She argues that we are social beings who are interrelated, and that privilege can blind us to that interdependency. There is an irony in this. Because privilege blinds us to the advantages we have, it also blinds us to those who in their disadvantage inadvertently help us benefit from privilege, and in turn how we actually harm ourselves over time from ignoring this injustice. That leads her to argue for social justice. Social justice requires fairness in human relationships in society. Privilege unevenly distributes advantage and therefore blocks social justice.

While privilege may be an unfortunate reality of our society, social justice is the antidote. According to Rawls (1999), the only way to have a civilized society is that "all social values—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage" (p. 54).

Teaching Privilege

As if understanding our own privilege is not hard enough, trying to teach about privilege seems to be even harder. Students rarely feel privileged: they struggle to juggle school, family friends, and finances. It is frequently difficult for our students to have enough resources to satisfy all their needs. Higher education is a special opportunity, with only 29% of the adult population in the United States having a baccalaureate degree or higher. The percentage gets even smaller as we ascend the educational achievement scale: only 10% of the total adult population has a graduate

degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Our social work students are educationally elite, as hard as that is for them to grasp. Telling this to social work students makes an impression, but they still tend to feel disadvantaged more than privileged. All of the stresses previously identified, coupled with entering a profession that pays lower salaries and has lower status than most other professions, hardly helps social work students recognize their privilege. Add to that the reality that social workers, more than in other professions, disproportionately include women and people of color, those who have been historically disadvantaged in our society, and it can become even more difficult to teach privilege. We are likely to enter a social work classroom with students who do not understand the complexity of the relationship between privilege and marginalization. It is a continuum with marginalization at one end and privilege at the other end. It is not a binary condition. We may be privileged in some instances, and marginalized in others. We may be privileged but unaware, privileged but denying it, privileged and feeling defensive, lacking privilege and angry, lacking privilege and internalizing inferiority, and all combinations of these situations. The struggle to understand privilege is a life-long process, and we often move between times of privilege and times of marginalization. So how do we teach about privilege?

We suggest teaching empathy, and particularly social empathy, as one way to pave the path to understanding privilege. To start to understand privilege, you need to understand the difference between yourself and others. We suggest that one of the best ways to achieve this is through empathy. Consider Layne's experience. She felt what powerlessness of a patient might be and wondered what it would be like to be in his situation, imagining he might be no different from a member of her family. To understand others as members of advantaged or disadvantaged groups and work towards societal good, human beings need to practice and understand empathy and social empathy. In this article, we share our concepts of empathy and social empathy, ways to teach

empathy and social empathy, and how the insight and knowledge gained can lead to understanding privilege.

What Is Empathy?

Most of us tend to assume that telling our students that, "Empathy is very important," is enough to convey its importance and help them become proficient in practice, an assumption which, however well-intentioned, is incorrect (Morgan & Morgan, 2005). Today we frequently hear the word "empathy" especially in political rhetoric, yet the definition and understanding of empathy varies. People generally agree that empathy is an interaction between two people with one person feeling what the other person is experiencing. However, there are numerous variations in the general public's understanding, such as sympathy, emotional contagion, and pity all of which are not empathy. We have developed a more detailed definition, blending the findings of numerous other disciplines and uniquely placing it within social work (Gerdes & Segal, in press). Empathy consists of three primary components: 1) an **affective response** to another's emotions or actions, 2) **cognitive processing** of the other person's perspective as well as one's own affective reaction, and 3) a **conscious decision-making** process that leads to empathic action.

In recent years, a great deal of research in the field of social cognitive neuroscience has emerged identifying the biophysical components that mediate empathy in the brain (Decety & Jackson, 2004; Decety & Lamm, 2006; Decety & Moriguchi, 2007). Neuroscientists used sophisticated brain imaging equipment to confirm what we have suspected for years, that when we see or hear another person's actions, such as laughing or crying, our body responds as if we are experiencing the same thing (Gazzola, Aziz-Zadeh, & Keysers, 2006). This phenomenon is called "mirroring," and the neural circuitry of the brain that facilitates this experience is called mirror neurons. We now know through the work of neuroscientists that the human brain is wired to emotionally mimic other people, and this mimicry initiates a physiological experience in the observer

When Karen saw the elderly woman in Taiwan, her visual and auditory mirror neurons kicked in and she began to have an automatic physiological and affective response. In other words Karen began to mentally mimic the woman's nonverbal actions and body posture and imagine what the woman was thinking and feeling. When Karen literally assumed the woman's position by taking over the heavy load on the bike, her insights were enhanced even further through somatic empathy or postural mirroring (Rand, 2002).

After the automatic physiological and affective response kicks in, cognitive processing of that response and of the other person's perspective begins. All of us, Liz through the vividness of a book, Karen and Layne through putting themselves physically in the place of the other, and Maria through listening nonjudgmentally to the children's stories about their lives, toggled back and forth between our own perspectives and the imagined perspectives and feelings of others. This cognitive processing, however, may or may not result in action. Moving beyond understanding and perspective-taking toward conscious, planned empathic action is perhaps one of the most critical components of this process for social workers. All three components of empathy can contribute greatly to understanding privilege, but empathic action can help to address the inequalities of privilege and promote social justice. For all of us, these early experiences as well as many since then, have created empathic moments and help us to continue deepening our understanding of privilege.

To be empathic, we need to affectively and physiologically respond to others' emotions, and have a cognitive awareness of the difference between what we are feeling and what the other person is feeling. This can only be accomplished when a person is self-aware and is capable of maintaining a boundary between self and other. Boundaries are maintained when we are open to another's experience without engaging our own opinions, thoughts, or emotions, and non-judgmentally accepting the other's experience. Brain science confirms that empathy has both biological components that are automatic and

a cognitive component that can be learned. Finally, when we apply empathy on a social level, we use the above skills to consider what life is like for members of groups different from our own and thereby , practice social empathy.

How Does Social Empathy Relate to Understanding Privilege?

We think the best way to teach about privilege is to infuse empathy in our teaching and use it as a tool to understand privilege. We can teach empathy by shifting our attention from a focus solely on information to concentrate more on what people are actually experiencing. Simply stated, one can go beyond thinking by integrating the whole person: thoughts and feelings. Unfortunately , in a society that encourages individualism, the stage is set for people to be overly preoccupied with their own experiences and often numb or reactive to the experiences of others. When one participates in activities that stimulate emotion as well as thought, empathy can occur offering the opportunity to step outside of ourselves. To view our own advantages or disadvantages compared to other people's life conditions requires all the skills of empathy . The concept of privilege requires this comparison: how can one be advantaged unless there is a social order where we can rank people's advantage relative to others? Thus, to understand privilege means we need to view our own situation and compare it to others. We need empathy to develop the skill of comparison. Social empathy takes this skill a step further . Empathy is the primary underlying ability behind social empathy which requires the ability to analyze social events and interactions. Simply put, social empathy is the application of empathic understanding on a societal level.

Teaching about Privilege through Empathy

Being empathic involves the three abilities discussed previously . The first is the physiological ability to mirror others. The second is the cognitive processing necessary to recognize the perspective of others, and the third is the conscious decision to act based on

empathic reaction. We can apply all three of these processes to teaching about privilege. Table 1 contains a model which outlines the steps to teach about privilege using empathy with three levels that follow progressively . Each level reflects the components of empathy and can result in achieving a deeper understanding of differences and privilege.

Table 1 - Model for Teaching Privilege through Empathy

LEVELS OF LEARNING QUESTIONS TO GUIDE LEARNING ACTIONS

Level 1 – EXPOSURE **viewing other people's lives.** Who is different from me? How are they different? *Visit places and people who are different from me.*

Level 2 – EXPLANATION **processing the differences in people's life experiences.** What are the differences? How have our lives been different? Why have our lives been different? What would it be like for me to live as a person of a different: class, sex, ability, age, sexual identity , race, nationality? *Read and study about different groups.*

Level 3 – EXPERIENCE **living the differences in people's life experiences and taking action.** Imagine your life as a person who is a different: class, sex, ability, age, sexual identity , race, nationality . What would it be like? What can you do to improve the well-being of people? *Spend time in places where people are different from you, interacting with people who are different from you, plan advocacy that leads to social justice.*

(based on Segal, 2007)

In our examples, Liz, Layne, and Maria explored levels 1 and 2 of the model. Karen's experience of living in a different community went further and took her to level 3. All three levels informed our actions. Our experiences reflected the neuroscience evidence of empathy. We had physical sensations, identified with people whose lives were different from our own, consciously processed that

information, and came to an understanding of how our life experiences differed. Over our lives, with these and other experiences and cognitive processing, we committed ourselves to the third process of taking action by becoming social workers and educators committed to advancing social justice. We believe teaching and modeling helped us get there. With guidance, we examined these ideas and feelings and developed a deeper understanding of privilege and social justice. As social work educators, we believe that teaching empathy from a social empathy perspective can help students to better understand privilege and social justice.

Teaching about Privilege Using Techniques that Apply Empathy

There are numerous exercises that can be used to view privilege through the use of empathy. The following vignettes can serve as discussion exercises with students:

Mary and John are an educated, white couple who both have the opportunity to take very good, high paying jobs as lawyers. However, they have very young children who need to be cared for during the day. The solution is to hire a nanny, a woman whom they would pay to come to their house and care for their children. This is not inherently problematic. The woman they may hire has homemaking skills, so she has the opportunity to take a job that needs her expertise, and they have the necessary skills to work in a law firm. However, they are thrilled to find that if they pay the nanny "under the table," that is without benefits and Social Security, it is less costly, and they can promise the nanny that she will have more money in her paycheck to spend now. She needs the job, does not have the professional degrees and job opportunities that Mary and John have, and the prospect of more money now seems reasonable. But what if we analyzed this through the lens of empathy? Would Mary and John be willing to do the same for their positions in the law firm? Would they prefer to take home more money now but not receive benefits such as health insurance, retirement coverage, or accrued vacation days? And what if we expand that analysis

and consider this example from a social empathy perspective? Do we want a two-tiered employment system where those who are less educated and female are unprepared for illness because they lack health insurance and have nothing available for retirement? Those are two areas that become social welfare responsibilities and hence affect all of us over time, including Mary and John. What are the privileges that Mary and John have that the nanny does not? Why?

Cathy and Joe have both taught sixth grade students for years in local elementary schools. The principal job in their district has opened, and both were asked to apply. The salary would be double what they are making now but there would be greater responsibilities and increased hours. They both consider it a major professional opportunity for advancement. Joe discusses it with his wife and although he will have less time and energy to help with the children at home, the long-term benefits of this promotion seem worth the costs to family. Cathy discusses it with her husband who works full-time as an accountant. The cost and stress of covering family obligations and care for the children by hiring someone to make up for the time Cathy will need for the principal job do not seem to be worth it. She decides not to put her name in for the position. Imagine how you might feel if you were Cathy? Joe? Their spouses? Are there subtle privileges for Joe? Or is it simply a matter of choosing alternatives? What are the broader implications?

Peter and Michael both teach English courses at the local community college. They love their jobs and get excellent student reviews. They are invited by their Dean to a social get-together at her house before the new semester starts. Peter smiles at the invitation and replies that he is sure his wife would be delighted to join him. Michael hesitates. He thinks about mentioning his partner of 10 years, David, but then hesitates. What if the Dean, his boss, or his colleagues were uncomfortable with his being gay and bringing his partner? Does Peter have a privilege?

Kay, a BSW who has a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, works at a public mental health clinic as a peer support specialist. These positions are open to people recovering from a mental health condition. Mary is a BSW who works at the same agency Mary is routinely included in social events with others in the workplace but Kay and other peer support specialists are never invited. Does Mary have a privilege?

Conclusion: Empathy Helps Us Understand Privilege

These vignettes raise issues of privilege in subtle, yet real ways. In the first, there are questions about the privilege of class, education, and possibly race and ethnicity. In the second, gender privilege is an issue. In the third, heterosexual privilege is raised. In the fourth, privilege granted to people who do not have a diagnosis of mental illness is described. By imagining ourselves as the characters in these vignettes, we can begin to trigger our mirror neurons, and with direction from the teacher process cognitively what we might be feeling. This is one way in the classroom to introduce empathy and privilege. Movies, novels, and field trips are other ways to trigger mirror neurons. Discussion allows for cognitive processing to integrate the experiences. Following these processes should be the third level of building empathy, the conscious decision-making of what can be done to address privilege in our society. Through these steps, empathy can help us to understand and dismantle privilege.

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PRIVILEGE TAG: LEARNING AND TRANSMITTING THE CONCEPT OF PRIVILEGE

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The following narratives demonstrate how each author experienced the acquisition of privilege in three different ways, then shared their knowledge with others in various manners and for various reasons. While each encountered and overcame challenges in themselves and others in their own unique fashion, the similarities between their experiences suggest pathways for educators and activists to consider in their own attempts to relay the concept of privilege.

Authors Note: The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policy of the United States Air Force Academy or any other government agency.

Learning about and accepting the concept of privilege is a difficult endeavor. Americans are taught such myths as “we are all equal” and “anyone can get ahead if they work hard enough.” These illusions are systematically perpetuated in our social institutions such as, for example, school and the media. When we start to realize that these values are actually ideological and not the reality for all people, it is common to experience cognitive dissonance. That is, our learned values tell us to reject the notion that our social identities (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, etc.) have anything to do with our own experiences and achievements in our lives. Further, it is difficult to absorb and accept the fact that when we live in a racist, sexist, heterosexist, etc. society, we are part of a system of inequalities. There is no opting out since everyone has some social identity that is privileged in society. That means we are all implicated in this unfair system (Ferber, Jiménez, Herrera, & Samuels, 2009). This concept of having privilege, an “unearned benefit” which serves to advantage us at the expense of others, is easy to reject because it goes against everything we are taught to believe is true for ourselves in society.

Thus, many people reject the notion of privilege. It is much more comfortable to believe in a meritocracy and especially in one's own merit. Some people, on the other hand, choose to accept that privilege exists, want to learn more about it, and even teach the concept to others. Their willingness to engage this topic may be due to their personal experiences or to the relationship they have with the person who is facilitating their learning about privilege. Those experiences and relationships can also dictate how likely they are to teach this concept to others once they have learned about it. The following narratives, when taken together, provide examples of this process: of learning about privilege, engaging the topic, and passing it on to others.

Dena

As a sociologist, I was always interested in conflict theory, specifically, the concept of social power inequalities. I spent much of my academic career studying those who had been on the disadvantaged side of the hierarchy. I focused on racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc., but had not thought a lot about the systemic power dynamics that serve to advantage some at the expense of others. And I had rarely if ever thought how my own actions or behaviors might contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities.

When I began teaching social theory, I continued to focus on the “isms,” but found that my students consistently pushed me to

delve further. They asked me questions about the power inequalities that perpetuated these "isms." I answered as many as I could, but was often left wondering about the depth of my answers. It started to dawn on me that I needed to learn more. I began to seek out any opportunity that might further my education in this area. I was fortunate to find a course at the University of Maryland, taught by Paul Gorski (founder of EdChange), on the topic of critical whiteness. This course changed my career, not to mention my life.

Gorski's course provided me with my first opportunity to hear the word *privilege* uttered in the context of inequality. I was exposed to Peggy McIntosh's (1988) seminal article, "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," and Allan Johnson's, *Privilege, Power, and Difference* (currently in its second edition, 2006), and started to realize what had been missing in my own education. I had been taught only to focus on "the disadvantaged" and to ignore the hierarchical structure that keeps inequalities in place. This course and these readings not only forced me to think about societal structures of inequality, but also to think about how all of this applied to my own life as a white Jewish woman.

Although I knew that as both a Jewish person and a woman, I had many disadvantages in U.S. society on a systemic level, I could hardly believe that it wasn't until I was an adult that I had started to understand the benefits of my white skin. I certainly considered myself a feminist and someone who understood the plight of living, at times, a disadvantaged life. As Johnson (2006) would say, I considered myself "one of the good ones," so I couldn't possibly be racist or sexist in my thinking or my behavior. I started to learn how my own social group memberships represented something much greater than me. For the first time, I began to realize that part of the responsibility for the successes in my life had everything to do with my white skin.

At first, I was in disbelief. I literally felt like I had been kicked in the stomach. I could hardly believe that I had spent my whole life taking my own privilege for granted. It seemed to be true based on what I understood about discrimination, but I was struggling with my

long-held learned values. In class, watching the video *The Color of Fear* (Mun Wah, 1994) helped me to recognize the resistance I was feeling, and to start to get beyond it to accept my own privilege. As the realization began to sink in, I was overwhelmed. My physical symptoms continued and intensified, mirroring my mental discomfort with this knowledge. Even as willing as I was to learn about the concept of privilege, I felt angry at society for the fact that it had been constructed so unequally, that my education had failed me, and that I, in turn, had failed society.

In the midst of trying to accept what I was learning, and to make sense of it, I had an experience that showed me that what I was learning wasn't just academic. For the first time, I was able to recognize a few of the real-life consequences of my privilege. After all, it is one thing to learn about privilege abstractly in the classroom with national macro-level examples; it is quite another to see my contribution unfurl right in front of me in my life.

One day, I walked into a supermarket to return an item. I held a bag in my hand that contained the item and the receipt. I went up to the customer service counter and stood behind an African American gentleman who was being helped by a white female clerk behind the desk. As soon as I got in line, the clerk looked up at me, and by a gesture of her hand, summoned me forward. As I was in mid-step, my arms outstretched with my bag, a light bulb went on in my head. Before I could stop myself, the clerk had already taken the bag out of my hand and started the process for returned items. My face turned bright red and I was truly in shock. My mind started to race as I began to put the pieces together: Why had this clerk interrupted her transaction with this gentleman and asked me to step forward? Is this what being *white* gets you? Is this an example of my "unearned" benefit at work? I started to reel as I tried to think of what I could do to ameliorate the situation. As I finished my step forward, I turned to the gentleman (who was now beside me) and said, "I am so sorry . I should not have stepped forward."

He looked at me and slowly said, "Lady it happens all the time."

I felt nauseated and still stunned as this was the first time I had consciously been confronted with my own privilege. Given what I had learned in class about creating change, and inspired by Dianne Sawyer's ABC News Prime Time Live video (1992) *True Colors* (in which she continually challenges the racist clerks with whom she comes in contact), I took a deep breath, turned to the clerk behind the counter, and said, "Excuse me, but can you tell me why you took me when you were already helping this gentleman?" The clerk looked up at me, looked over at the man, and quickly looked down, silent, her face turning a deep shade of red. I realized at that moment that this was, in fact, how privilege works. My stepping forward to be helped by this clerk represented the entitlement I had been taught I deserved, and the benefit afforded to those with white skin. After the additional 30 seconds or so it took the clerk to process my return, I turned to the man and apologized again. As I left, I was overcome with shame and embarrassment when I remembered that my very first thought as I saw the clerk summon me forward had been, "Oh good, I can get this errand done quickly" with no immediate regard for "at whose expense."

In relaying this story to others, I have experienced incredible resistance. Some have claimed there must be an alternative explanation for my experience, immediately trying to put the blame on the African American man using any number of convoluted rationalizations. Since I was there, I know there were no extenuating circumstances. Both of us had receipts (actually, the clerk knew he had his but didn't yet know I had mine), no supervisor was needed for either return, neither of us had credit card or personal check issues, etc. Although the explanations people have suggested are extremely creative, they ignore the obvious and most parsimonious answer: different races are treated differently. People will misread and mishear the most obvious of situations in order to avoid the idea that their egalitarian vision of the world may not be accurate.

In the midst of all of this learning and discomfort, I found somewhat of an outlet from my partner, Steve. I began to share with him what I had been learning in class and my experience at the supermarket. For me, talking about privilege helped me further understand and work through my own feelings around the concept of privilege. He was willing to listen as I spoke about these issues, though he often challenged me on many of my arguments. He was clearly skeptical, having himself never learned about this topic either in a book or in a classroom. I believe he listened, at least at first, only out of respect for me. Even though every course I teach now is grounded in privilege theory, at the time, I was not necessarily trying to teach Steve something I thought would benefit him. In reality I was sharing with him something I thought was very important, that I was trying to make sense of for myself, and that I hoped he might consider. Our relationship was strong enough that I felt he took what I had to say seriously.

Steve

"Yes dear," I said, as Dena was explaining this new concept she was studying to me. The strange thing is, I'm not a "yes, dear" kind of person. I know my life partner is incredibly smart and insightful, and when she puts thought into an idea, it is usually worthwhile. What she was explaining to me, however, seemed like nonsense. I didn't see my whiteness or maleness as buying me any advantages. And my Judaism allowed me to tell myself I understood oppression (although I didn't realize at the time that since I am neither Orthodox nor Chasidic, which would indicate my religion to others, my Judaism is largely an invisible identity).

Additionally, as a social psychologist, I very much understood how prejudice plays out in the world. Every semester I teach racism and sexism, and how discrimination exists to this day. I also knew that as *overt* prejudice (the attitude) and discrimination (the behavior) were on the wane, *covert* racist and sexist attitudes and behaviors were on the rise. For example, every social psychological textbook has graphs showing beliefs about racial segregation have declined over time while the amount of people

who would vote for a qualified woman as president has increased. But subtler forms of discrimination still exist. This modern racism and sexism especially come out in statements denying any lingering forms of discrimination; we often hear people say, "racism/sexism no longer exists."

And yet, despite my respect for my partner and my social psychological knowledge about American cultural inequity and inequality my reaction was still to ignore, rationalize, and explain away the logic and evidence of privilege. This bothered me intensely as I was quite conscious of the competing ideas. The term "wrestling with my thoughts" was never quite so meaningful as I tried to reconcile the dichotomy of respect for my partner and knowledge that the world isn't fair with the severe desire to believe that I, and I alone, completely earned and deserved my successes.

I did my best to keep an open mind and look for real-world stories where oppression manifested itself. Dena's unambiguous experience in the supermarket shocked me to the core... and her refusal to be a co-conspirator served as a role model for me. Again, I was of two minds as I hoped I could emulate her reaction and yet still wasn't 100% convinced of the phenomenon.

Was this an anomaly? Perhaps her supermarket clerk was one of the few overt racists and an exception to the way the world worked that coincidentally occurred after Dena began to understand how privilege plays out in the world (certainly not the most parsimonious explanation!). Then, not two weeks later, I found myself in a similar situation that helped me move past the previous resistant rationalizations. On a Sunday afternoon, my family entered a frozen yogurt shop and got in line behind an African American family. Like many ice cream shops in America, their children and our children were walking up and down the long counter looking at the vast number of flavors. At the same time, the adults were clearly positioned in line, with Dena and me behind them. When the lone worker behind the counter finished with the previous customer she first looked at the African American couple then turned to

look at me. Without a pause, she said to me, "Can I help you?"

Now I knew how Dena felt, and why she said she felt physically sick at times. My stomach flip-flopped and a myriad of thoughts and feelings went through my mind. I now had to deal with the backlog I had created by not processing what I had been made aware of over the course of the previous months. My mind went in several different directions: I felt pure panic; I realized I had not necessarily earned all my life accomplishments; and (weirdly) I was overwhelmed by a certain satisfying peace as I finally started to understand what was really happening. I also felt horror that this wasn't the first time I was in this situation and I had been part of the problem along the way. Accompanying that was the idea that things could, and would, change. Fortunately, my discussions with Dena prepared me; her supermarket experience provided me the knowledge that I didn't have to be passive. "I'm sorry," I said, "but this family was clearly in front of us."

The worker paused, as if confused. She then said, "No, they haven't decided yet." Since I had been standing there the whole time, I realized there was no way the worker could have known that as she had not asked them. Moreover, in American ice cream and frozen yogurt shops, the norm is to ask for several "tastes," ostensibly to discover what one wants to order. Thus, it is perfectly acceptable, even expected, that someone not know what they want before they order. Regardless, as mentioned above, the server had not asked them if they even wanted to try anything.

Again, Dena's experience prepared me for the resistance the worker was giving me, although I was surprised to see how strongly the clerk was fighting back, clearly not wanting to admit her learned racism. Her reaction, of course, mirrored my reactions to Dena throughout the past few months. Seeing myself in her made me ashamed. I turned to the family and said in the most quizzical voice I could generate, "Is that true?"

"No," said the father figure, "We're ready." And they proceeded to order.

Of course, while my participation in this oppressive situation was minimized, the worker

had still disempowered the family. At a simple level, the children had lost the opportunity to have several tastes. In fact, when one child began to talk about what flavors she was deciding between, the worker tried to catch my attention and rolled her eyes about this inconvenience. Somehow, she still believed I was her silent ally. In many ways, we did resemble each other. We were both white, and both dressed in t-shirts and shorts given the hot day. The African American family, on the other hand, was dressed extremely well in suits and dresses, as if coming from church or another formal setting. Their higher SES dictated by their dress was eclipsed by my race. More than even the initial experience itself, this tantamount alliance told me how challenging my new knowledge would be to share.

With eyes opening (not yet fully opened, but finally on the path), I have continued to notice privilege manifest itself. I started actively trying to make a difference and have collected anecdotes to share with others. For example, at the supermarket deli counter, I am sometimes taken ahead of a person of color, or at least asked if I were next. I have learned in such situations to stand behind a person so as to make the situation as concrete as possible. Remembering my own resistance, and knowing how important concrete examples were to me, these become great ways to start conversations with my students about privilege and race. I start by asking, "Have you ever been in a line and someone behind you was taken before you were?"

When I pose this question to white people, they simply do not understand what I am asking. "You mean, if there's no real line and they accidentally think someone else was in front of me?" or "You mean, if there are two lines and I'm in the slower moving one?" or "You mean, if I forgot to grab one of those number tickets?"

"No," I calmly explain, "I mean you are in front of them, you know it, they know it, the server knows it, and the server takes the person behind you first." Most white people continue to protest that cannot happen as that's what a line is for. Like Dena, I have encountered people who have created

outlandish alternatives rather than admitting what happened in the ice cream store was racially motivated. One even claimed that people who get free tastes ought to be served more slowly; interesting, as this is simply not what happens in America, and thus cannot be the explanation. Additionally, this person appeared to have actually invented this explanation as my account specifically stated the group in front of me did *not* get to taste anything. Better to mishear or even create an alternate normative experience than admit the uncomfortable truth. On the other hand, when I speak to African American groups or individuals, most nod their heads and understand exactly what I am talking about.

That's the struggle, of course. I do not believe my experiences are different from most others privileged by society I had clearly albeit perhaps unwittingly, participated in a system of oppression in which I benefitted. As I discussed with and taught colleagues and students, I came to realize that those in positions of privilege consistently had no idea what I was talking about, and actively resisted any and all evidence that they benefitted at the expense of others. In fact, many were convinced that it was the oppressed groups that actually benefitted due to affirmative action programs and other ways organizations use to foster diversity in their ranks. I still remember sharing Johnson's (2006) *Privilege, Power, and Difference* with a colleague I consider quite intelligent and his response was pure astonishment: "Do you really believe this?"

Again, those who are in oppressed groups perfectly understand what's happening. They shrug their shoulders after reading Johnson's book as if to say, "Isn't this obvious?" For nearly all people of color their lack of privilege is not invisible to them, and thus they find little surprising in the concept. This is true for other oppressed social identities as well. I interact with many female cadets who, by virtue of living in the masculinized world of the Air Force Academy, understand the concept since they witness male privilege every day.

As an educator, and a person who wants to create a better Air Force Academy and a better world, I struggle with how to get this crucial message across. Realizing my target

audience has to be those in privileged groups, I continued to think about ways to reduce their resistance. Glancing through the newspaper one day, I realized that perhaps I could use sports to help others understand the concept of privilege. Specifically, while American Division I college basketball invites the winner of each conference into its championship tournament, college football only allows the top two ranked schools to compete for the championship. As opposed to basketball, the top two teams in football are not determined by their performances, but rather by the voting of coaches and sportswriters. Over the years, it had become clear to me that different teams and different conferences are treated unequally. That is, regardless of their won-loss records, certain teams from certain conferences would never be chosen for the championship game (S.M. Samuels & Martínez, 2009).

I have found less resistance in explaining this system of privilege due to the fact that it is not about social identity. Still, some resistance does occur and is similar to that described above. Though not as personally relevant (and thus not as volatile), some people remain wedded to the status quo and are unwilling to accept counter explanations. They may argue that some football conferences are more competitive than others. That is, some teams play more difficult schedules because they have to play other members of their conferences who are better teams. While this can be true, notice this is circular reasoning: conferences are better because they have better teams, and teams are better because they play in better conferences. Thus, reputation is as much a factor as on-field excellence in determining who the best teams are.

Excellence is further compromised by reputation when polling is examined. Again, there are two subjective polls that heavily influence the final BCS poll (Bowl Championship Series, a computer poll which takes the two human polls strongly into account to determine the ranking of all teams). One poll is based on coaches' opinions, which is so obviously problematic I will not further discuss it here. The other poll is based on the opinions

of sportswriters, who may or may not be biased in favor of local (or favorite) teams. Even if a sportswriter is perfectly unbiased, she or he will not be able to watch every team play every week. Instead, only the "best teams from the best conferences" are regularly televised. Again, a systemic form of privilege: those that have power retain power.

An additional argument I hear in favor of the present system is that the bowls often select teams based on how large a crowd they can attract. This argument, of course, is *exactly* what privilege argues: it is not talent that matters, but power (in this case, money). Regardless, even if someone believes that the above system works perfectly the fact is when the season starts, *not every team has a chance to win the championship*. That is, regardless of their actual success on the field, the simple fact is that the eventual champion is already pre-ordained to be from a specific group of conferences. Not surprisingly, the University of Utah, the *only* undefeated team in the 2008 season, attempted to sue the NCAA after not being picked for the championship game. Like the University of Hawaii, the only undefeated team in the regular season in 2007, and Boise State, the only undefeated team in 2006, Utah never had a chance to be champion based solely on their conference and not their ability. In sum, American college football remains the *only* team sport where reputation is comparable in importance with actual on-field performance.

This football structure presented an excellent analogy to the social systems of inequality. Now all I needed was a student to help me look in depth into a privileged team and a non-privileged team for one season to see if my assumptions were correct.

Jaime

I kept shaking my head in disapproval as I sat in Dr. Samuels' office, listening to ideas for independent research. Many of the topics he proposed did not interest me, but the mention of privilege raised my curiosity. The thought that some people have systematic advantages over others in today's society made me feel disconcerted. Having been born and raised in the relatively homogenous population

of San Juan, Puerto Rico, I carried some incorrect preconceptions about privilege. Growing up, I thought discrimination had been largely abolished, something that seldom occurred in this day and age, and that I would never experience. After visiting the United States, however, I saw a clear disparity in the treatment of virtually every non-dominant demographic group. Most notably, I saw how the color of your skin can give or deny you the benefit of the doubt. Being Hispanic, I have experienced differential treatment from people of other races, but my ethnicity is only a very small part of it. Being male and going to prestigious, competitive schools have also been part of what segregates me from others in society, for better or for worse.

Despite my first-hand experiences, I still did not fully understand the widespread implications of privilege. For example, I thought of affirmative action as a form of reverse-discrimination, not recognizing the legacy of systemic inequalities creating the culture's need for it. Because of my racial and cultural background, I could see how some forms of privilege manifested themselves more than others. Even after exploring the concept more in depth, I was still confused by what exactly privilege was and how it could possibly be so widely spread through society. I decided to take on privilege as a research topic.

While sharing my research topic with classmates, their reactions made me realize how prevalent privilege really is. While the women and Black males I approached generally recognized my research as valid and expressed disappointment and, in some cases, anger towards the prevalence and subtlety of this benefit imbalance, White males generally were very dismissive of the whole endeavor. I was finally seeing privilege unfold before me, and it became easier for me to understand how it is manifested and perpetuated. With difficulty, I started to see that privilege is insidious and felt concerned that it would neither be as easy to teach nor be as obvious to comprehend as discrimination is.

Johnson's (2006) *Privilege, Power, and Difference* further opened my eyes to the world of privilege and how it remains deeply engrained in daily societal interactions. I started

to understand how uncomfortable it is for us to admit that we are favored by certain characteristics, and how we pass the blame on to someone else, thinking "that is just the way it's always been" or "I didn't do anything to cast privilege upon myself." After reading *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, I thought about examples of privilege that I had seen or experienced. For example, I experience male privilege whenever someone doesn't think twice about lending me their stick shift car (though I cannot drive one) while they are skeptical to lend a woman the same car. Yet, it still is difficult today for me to recognize my male privilege until I see women being treated differently.

Perhaps the most obvious example of privilege presented itself while dining with my sponsor (who was also Hispanic) at a restaurant where a waitress served white newcomers around us first even though we had been in the restaurant for a longer time. The invisibility of privilege allowed those customers to have been impressed with the waitress' expeditious service, likely unaware that it was at our expense. They had their drinks refilled several times while we sat thirsty trying to get the waitress's attention. Another example is that every time I have been pulled over in a speed trap in Texas, I have watched as white violators received their citation and were let go while Hispanic drivers were interrogated longer. For me, it always seems to be about questioning my citizenship and my credentials. On the other hand, my privilege became apparent when the same police officers let me go with a warning when they learn that I am a military member. Although for me being in the military was voluntary and thus somewhat of an earned privilege, it has nothing to do with driving.

Returning to our research, we began to explore privilege in other social systems to see if there were less controversial ways of starting a conversation about it with the goal of reducing initial resistance. For example, in politics, the use of caucuses over primary voting is an example of privilege. The timing and time commitment privilege those who are available at night over those who are not: those who work nights, single parents with small

children, and others who do not have full control over their schedules. We chose to focus on college football because of its widespread popularity, especially among dominant groups who often exhibit resistance when introduced to the concept of privilege.

Upon analyzing how teams are ranked and following trends over the season, we found strong evidence that teams from certain conferences were privileged by receiving higher subjective rankings and therefore received more money by going to better bowls. For example, we found that wins over similar opponents helped privileged teams more than they helped non-privileged teams, while losses over similar opponents hurt non-privileged teams more than they hurt privileged teams (S.M. Samuels & Martinez, 2009). This example resonated with me not only because football is safe to talk about in public, but also because I knew very little about college football, so I did not have to worry that I might favor one team over another in my analysis.

Soon after the 2007 season, I set out to share this knowledge and expose privilege in college football to my peers. I did not reveal that I was doing research; instead I just started talking about football. I found that I still experienced mixed reactions to my conclusion that some conferences are favored in rankings. People who were not very passionate about football were open to the existence of privilege, and I felt like they had a better understanding of how privilege is self-sustaining. From there I revealed how privilege plays out in other areas of society, and I felt it was easier for them to make the connection to other, more serious situations. On the other hand, when I exposed privilege in football to diehard fans, they immediately provided me with a long list of reasons why the BCS system was fair (e.g., pointing out the quality of the teams each conference plays). I felt defeated. It was nearly impossible to transmit these ideas to my peers because they were blinded by passion for the teams they supported. It seemed as if I was discrediting them directly as they experienced privilege vicariously through their chosen teams.

Interestingly, months later, long after the season had ended, several who had initially

balked at my conclusions came back to me and admitted that the system has some flaws, but still failed to understand how privilege feeds on and perpetuates itself. For them, understanding privilege only began when I was able to find a different example other than football. Then I understood that to them, talking about football was like talking about race or gender. A wider range of people were receptive to the election example. They could sympathize with shift workers and single parents who could not attend caucuses, and began to understand that if they didn't live in New Hampshire or Iowa, most states have a much later, and thus less influential, primary election.

As for me, I've seen privilege affect people in different groups and in organizations I did not think possible. I had gone from thinking inequality no longer existed to thinking about it as a problem that was so deeply engrained in society that there was nothing I could do but let it be, and that hopefully it would disappear. Now I feel that eradicating every kind of privilege is my responsibility; I should be the change I want to see, and help people understand how it works and how it is their problem too. It seems too few people understand it, and of the people who do recognize it, many condemn it but then sit with their arms crossed waiting for privilege to abolish itself. I find myself thinking that if we could take an extra step in education to show people how privilege directly affects them and their loved ones, everyone would take ownership over the problem.

Conclusion

Dena, Steve, and Jaime share different experiences and new realizations as they make their own journeys to understanding privilege. The panic, disbelief, and disappointment they felt compelled them to transmit their knowledge. Hence, awareness of privilege extends as each person becomes the next person's mentor. Of course, this is only one section of the whole timeline: we know that Paul Gorski came before Dena and many of Jaime's friends come after him.

Despite their differences, all three authors learned the process slowly over time. While

each described a breakthrough experience, it seemed to be preceded by a lot of work for each of them. Not only did they need to learn the theory, but also they had to be made aware of how privilege impacts others and themselves. Each described emotional (and even physical) responses that *preceded* their breakthrough. It is as if their bodies comprehended the depth of these concepts before their minds did. But instead of avoiding those feelings, all three encountered concrete experiences that made the basics of privilege finally clear. These similarities should help educators and activists understand that privilege cannot be taught with only a lecture. Instead, they should expect to take time to get the concept across and be ready to support learners as they move through the emotional and even physical difficulties that will almost certainly occur. Creating or facilitating real life experiences that lead to breakthroughs can solidify the real-life awareness and understanding of privilege.

Interestingly, it was not the dramatic, national examples that created the transformation in the authors. Rather it was the everyday mundane examples that shocked them and truly helped them understand their own contribution to the continuance of privilege. That makes sense, of course, as the personal is always the most compelling. National issues, on the other hand, serve to educate us only about generalities. For example, when 58 year old African American Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. was arrested inside his own home, it highlights that police may treat different races differently. But it is the trivial experiences of people's lives that truly seem to open their eyes and change their inner-beliefs. Additionally, it is quite easy to invent circumstances surrounding a distant example (e.g., the tremendous in-depth commentary generated by Gates' arrest by people who had absolutely no knowledge of events beyond basic facts garnered from the news). This is juxtaposed with the experiences of the authors; when something happened in their own lives, they realized there were no mitigating circumstances and the concept of privilege could not be explained away.

All three authors have important differences, of course. Their individual backgrounds and social identities better prepare them for the revolutionary outlook of privilege. Dena as a white, female, sociologist has a different experience than Jaime as a Hispanic, male, AirForce Academy cadet. And both are radically different from Steve, who as a white, heterosexual, able-bodied male has the prototypical identity to benefit from privilege. Perhaps this is why Steve exhibited the most resistance to the concept. Or perhaps it might be due to the fact he was the only one who came to the acquisition piece less than voluntarily. Dena actively sought out answers to her students' questions and Jaime deliberately chose the topic for his research endeavor.

These differences in their identities and in their willingness to learn inform us that students will probably be more receptive to the concept of privilege when they are made aware of their own oppressed identities than when they come to the topic of their own accord. Similarly, it likely will be much more difficult to force this learning on others who are unwilling to examine themselves and their place in society. This may be especially significant for those institutions that *mandate* such an experience via courses or trainings rather than *recommend* diversity and inclusiveness workshops. That said, Steve's learning demonstrates this resistance may be overcome if a personal relationship exists where the resistant person trusts and respects the educator. Further, Jaime's work shows that using domains not central to social identity may reduce the resistance as well.

Added together, these stories make a powerful statement about creating change in the world. Jaime notes that it is not enough to simply understand privilege; taking action matters. There may be something inherent in understanding privilege that encourages activism. As the authors stated in their narratives, once they began to understand the dynamics of privilege, they clearly felt motivated to create change. Is it possible, then, that this motivation is somehow due to their individual personalities and experiences? Or rather that those who truly accept privilege

often feel compelled to become a social activist? If Dena's teaching experience is any indication, she reports that those students who have internalized the concept of privilege are much more likely to choose to actively fight systemic inequalities, as compared to students she taught prior to learning about privilege herself. Perhaps as Johnson (2006) suggests, truly understanding privilege means you now know that you are responsible: you are either part of the problem or part of the solution.

Ultimately, this paper is not simply a section of a timeline as mentioned above. Rather, it represents a limb of an ever-spreading tree as each person talks to many people, who then go on to question and challenge many others. Each person becomes a node for change, with huge transformational potential as the people each reaches become their own new nodes for change. We are not suggesting that once a person understands privilege and teaches the concept to others that all now completely understand it. Accepting the existence of systemic privilege is the first step in the lifelong journey of self-reflection and social justice work. But that first step is critically important because privilege provides a framework for contextualizing our learned social behaviors and how they often can maintain or even reinforce systemic inequalities (S.M. Samuels & Samuels, in press). Learning and teaching about privilege

is vital to the process of dismantling those systems to create a more socially just world.

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OUR FORTY YEARS IN THE DESERT: A REFLECTION ON STONEWALL

Jim Davis Rosenthal, Ph.D., University of Colorado, Boulder

This narrative examines questions of privilege and identity through the lens of an LGBT studies course taught forty years after the Stonewall Rebellion. Inspiration is found in ancient biblical texts, the modern civil rights movement, and the trans and queer liberation movements.

A song for Miriam, for Moses,
for Rosa and Martin,
for Sylvia and Harvey,
for Lee and Leona.

"Miriam the prophetess ... took the tambourine in her hand; and all the women followed her with tambourines and dances." —Exodus

I had to ban the words "olden times" from the introductory college course in LGBT studies. It was not that I was so invested in a strict historicism; my own pedagogical choices were far too eclectic and whimsical. Rather, several weeks into the semester, I could see in glimpses that they wanted "their" history and needed it, at once intimate and personal, and in the next moment entirely other-oriented, selfless and generous.

After weeks of preparation I performed a sleight-of-hand, a transformational shell game, and as they watched the red ball appear each time where they did not expect it, I was changed irrevocably and I suspect they were as well. Though I had no shells, the shuffle was simple. I asked my students in succession whether they considered their own freedoms to be dependent first on the work of Martin Luther King, Jr., then on Rosa Parks, and finally Harvey Milk. At each stage they acknowledged the contributions of those who had come before them, though they had only just watched *The Times of Harvey Milk*, and

could only piece together Kodachrome snapshots of what could not be imagined before Harvey, and now, to them, feels like air, water, or sunshine.

We then read of butch and femme lesbians in Buffalo, New York in the 1950s, and I asked my students what freedoms they enjoy because of the example of these women. With this they struggled; with enough prodding, many women could point to strength, independence, self-sufficiency; they had moments of clarity in the haze of privilege in which some of us live. For the men, this was a tougher exercise, until I pointed to the economic benefits of equality, and more invisibly, the mere fact that their friendships with women are not disreputable or taboo. In my view, this was a direct benefit of the struggle for equality in the workplace and for sexual liberation.

How much I hoped they would throw themselves against barricades if only their rights of friendship were challenged. Yet not every student in the class had such an easy claim on free association, nor the invisible scaffolding that allows relationships at all, let alone those across the chasms of gender.

I use the words "women" and "men" tentatively because many people I love are neither or both, or have been both, or simply choose their gender strategically, but for the students in this class, Intro to LGBT Studies, "T" was often their greatest place of challenge and the greatest place of learning. But, more of that later...

I have taught for a long time, but this was my first experience teaching TBGL studies. My dissertation focuses on African American and Chicano/a literature, and I've taught courses in leadership, Jewish American literature, and creative writing. For this course, however, my greatest challenge was in learning who the students were and what they wanted and needed to learn. Perhaps there are curricula that stand independent of the makeup of the student body, or at least there are teachers who assume that the curricula is objectively independent of the group to which it is being taught. However, almost by definition, a course structured around identities cannot be independent in this way: any learning that takes place must be at the nexus of where we are coming from and where we are going.

When I taught Jewish American literature, the "nightmare" student was either a fundamentalist Christian with an agenda for salvation or a neo-Nazi. I had the former and a friend the latter. It's hard even to admit that a student can be a nightmare, because as an educator, it is so central to me that all students deserve my attention, each according to their needs, if you'll forgive a phrase now so charged with historical weight that its beauty has been lost. But, those of us with marginalized identities know that we are vulnerable as educators to types of privilege we don't enjoy, and, so, a single student can do harm in the classroom, not just to individuals, and to the teacher, but to the curriculum itself.

In this queer studies class, the first victim was queer. Not a student, but the idea. In the mid-1990s, when CU Boulder first began its LGBT Studies program, after we graduate students and faculty had lobbied for a course of study that has never been at anything less than full capacity, it was, I believed, a given that the majority of students taking these courses were lesbian, bisexual, trans, gay, or at least questioning.

Now, nearly a decade into the twenty-first century, this is no longer the case. Hoping to learn students' names as quickly as possible, I took advantage of the system that allows faculty to view a photo roster but this proved much more fraught than I had expected. The roster gave me cues as to the potential makeup

of the class from an ethnicity and gender perspective, but I started to feel as if my "gaydar" was in need of a tuneup. I knew, of course, that sexual orientation has too long been assumed to be something one can identify from hackneyed stereotypes of femme and butch, but what was surprising was not the diversity of the photographs, but their sameness—their lack of distinction from each other and from the student body in general. At the time I attributed this to the dating of the photographs, the majority of which are based on student ID pictures taken at the time students are admitted. Surely the conformity was related to the first year students' need to "fit in," and not to an assimilationist victory in which "we're just like everybody else" has had so much propagandistic success that it becomes true.

It chills me to think that I was, even for a moment, caught up in such a physiognomy let alone that so much research of our own time is focused on measuring the length of gay men's fingers or the swirl pattern of the hair on the back of our heads. We have not abandoned our eugenic notions, though we pursue these, masked in the cloak of scientific method, and ever more clinically. At least gaydar still has the aura of the mystical about it.

Armed with a briefcase full of assumptions, I printed out the pictures and used them to take roll. Thankfully, the students presented in many more dimensions than their 2D images suggested, but my gaydar was still troubled. When I distribute a syllabus, the students' first assignment is always to fill out a questionnaire that allows me to get to know them better. Among the questions I ask are: "What was the best class you ever had and why?" "Do you have any preferences about preferred names or pronouns?" "Is there anything you'd like to or need to tell me?" A few of the students came out to me and others revealed important information, but this early in the term, sadly, many students did not take advantage of my invitations. They were going to make me work to know them better.

I had chosen to delay assigning most of the readings until I had a better sense of what they knew and what they didn't. This proved

a smart choice and, though it is more work to customize the readings, it saved me from many potential disasters of readings that lacked needed context and timing.

On the first day of class I make it a practice to give students an overview of the directions we will take in studying the subject at hand. I landed on them a little boldly, probably, by using terms like “queer” and “trans” with abandon, describing myself as both, and letting them know that the latter would require more explanation later in the term. I was, perhaps, a little too much like Emma Thompson appearing as the Angel in America to Justin Kirk’s Prior Walter, but once the corners of the room had collapsed, we started back on Earth, and I introduced them to my muse.

My muse was my grandmother, Leona, a picture of whom I showed them likely taken in the 1920s or early 30s. She is breathtakingly young in the photo and just on the cherubic side of androgyne. The photograph is remarkable in that she is dressed fully in a man’s suit, and, without telling the students anything about her, including that she was related to me, I asked them to make their observations about what they saw. They were partially divided as to her sex. Her hair is curly but short. She is standing next to someone who has been cropped out of the photo, and it is signed “Yours Truly, Lee,” again neutral with regard to gender. That she came to possess a photograph that she had signed to someone else lends even more mystery, though the students could not have known this. I suspect she stands next to a man, but we really see only an ear and a very faded portion of a face, and very little else by which to judge.

All these details were clear enough to the class, but they missed a key detail, which was her tie and the gender of the suit: she was not wearing a stylized version of a man’s suit; rather, she was wearing a man’s suit and tie, and the knot on the tie is a double Windsor. The details of gender presentation are something they came to appreciate later in the class, particularly when we watched *Paris Is Burning*, but the extent of my grandmother’s gender crossing demonstrates skill and choice, not something haphazard or costumed. I know

some other things about her through photographs, and these are that she always chose to present the same side of her face, and, though I have a very early picture of her in a dress, in every other photograph and memory, she is wearing pants; never again a suit, but always pants.

And she is happy in this photo, or at least confident and self-assured. It is only in combination with the troubled parts of her life that I suspect she may have struggled with gender identity or sexual orientation, but I only have this photograph because she kept it, again with someone cropped out of it, on a built-in bookshelf behind her easy chair, among her personal objects, adjacent to my grandfather’s parallel chair and bookshelf. Some piece of whomever she was long before my birth always stood ready at her right shoulder, and I’ll never know whether this was a source of comfort or longing, or perhaps both. My grandmother lived the majority of her life before Stonewall, and I have lived the majority of my life after.

I used the photograph to introduce uncertainty, and this is why I say the first victim was queer, not a person, but the idea. Queer requires comfort with uncertainty... or... you aren’t supposed to know whether Divine eats the dog poop at the end of *Pink Flamingoes*. My students were uneasy, for the most part, with uncertainty, and at times I had to break the fourth wall and tell them that I was intentionally not defining something because they had to learn to be comfortable with liminality. Oh! How I frustrated them by saying the only answer I could give them was the one they themselves produced. I did this, by the way, with a significant measure of glee.

This lesson proved useful immediately when we studied Sappho, a poet whose life is potentially impossibly different from one we can understand, and who still leaps off the page like she just spent the weekend at Alice Walker’s house. In this she is aided by Mary Barnard’s now fifty-year old translation, but whose spare poetics reminds us of the power of poetry to place us in conversation with another time and place. Barnard translates Sappho not unlike King James’ scribes translated the Bible—not faithfully, but

beautifully—and at times, I suspect, closer to the spirit than the literal would allow

Uncertainty was virtuous when we read from multiple translations of the Hebrew and Christian Bible as well, the delicious love of Jonathan for David, the insistent love of Ruth and Naomi, and the mystery of a bi-gendered Adam/Eve creature who exists in some printings on the very same spread with the hierarchical and simply comical myth of Woman being torn from Man. There are two origin myths together in Genesis, and one of them is far less known, though John Cameron Mitchell does an excellent rendering in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*.

Our “queer” friend was still on life-support by the third class or so, when one student approached me after class and informed me she was considering dropping the class unless I intervened on the comments from other students. A quick interview revealed her to be a non-traditional student and a remarkable one. Over the course of the semester she unveiled much about herself including her career in the film industry, her deep knowledge of alternative sexualities and her own explorations, that she had been a sex worker, and that she had intentions of becoming a social worker with a particular interest in gender non-conforming communities. Her reason for frustration—not with me, but with the other students—was their immature grasp of sexual language. In essence, their sophomoric approach to “it.”

Desperate not to lose someone with whom I had developed an immediate interest, I asked her to reconsider, and gave her a semester-long assignment to keep her engaged. I knew of her interest in counseling, and I pointed out that the class was sophomoric, in fact, because it was a 200 level course. I asked her to stay and to stay in touch with me, and to turn her gaze toward the students as if they were members of a counseling group; not her peers in the way of life experience or academic mastery, but a group for whom she would have to model her fluency with sexuality. I can’t say this was the end of her frustration, but it gave us a bond and allowed me to speak to her needs—sometimes in code, and sometimes by way of asides—so she knew she wasn’t abandoned. By the end of the semester, if my

observations were correct, she had befriended the students who most annoyed her at the beginning.

At the other end of the spectrum were two students from other countries, one of them Muslim, whose interest in the class is something I may always have to accept as an uncertainty. These two students were among the three males in the class who identified as heterosexual. The remaining males all eventually came out to me or to the class. One of the foreign students said he was interested in the topic because it was not something that exists in his country; while we all know that this is not *exactly* the case, he is correct in the sense that his country is one where open homo/bisexuality or gender variance in the Western sense is rarely displayed at this particular cultural moment.

The Muslim student acknowledged the existence of homo/bisexuality in his country, but told me that gender variance (my term) of any kind amongst males was met by strict religious intervention in the form of head-shaving and public embarrassment. He ultimately came to view homo/bisexuality and gender variance as genetic illnesses, which, for him, was a place of authentic compassion. He also worked harder than nearly any other student in the class; visiting my office hours regularly to work on revisions to his papers, and pursuing his arguments in a more considered way than most. All of this took place in a second language, so many of our conversations were Semitic in nature, at least as often about my appreciation for Muslim thought and culture and my insistence that if he were to attempt to invoke a religious argument, he must do so studiously and not selectively, to honor our mutual traditions of jurisprudence.

If this curriculum were going to serve all of these students, I had a serious challenge before me. I certainly had to give the students enough of the basics to expect them to function in any future studies; they couldn’t leave my class without some canonical² material, such as Stonewall, the 1973 American Psychological Association’s removal of homosexuality from the DSM, or the nearly two century tradition of drag balls in Harlem.

Del Martin, who that summer had legally married Phyllis Lyon, her partner of 60 years, passed away early in our semester, and I quickly reordered some of the Sapphic material to allow us time with these modern legends. I had already selected enough material to be pan-historical, multicultural, and international. I also spent a lot of time weaving in trans and intersex material, beginning with Anne Fausto-Sterling's *The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough*, and *Five Sexes Revisited*, and bringing the theme back in throughout the semester.

It's my opinion and an emerging reality that we should eventually teach transgender studies as a curriculum unto itself, but there is a wisdom in BTGL, and it is that all the students must leave their comfort zones for a time. If I have one regret about this course, it would be that I didn't give the gay boys or their straight girlfriends enough gay material to bolster them because I was so concerned about not underrepresenting the other communities. By this I mean that the strength of LGBT Studies is also its failure: the most devastating end-of-term evaluation was from a gay student who said he was uncomfortable to speak in class because he had just come out and was afraid to betray his lack of knowledge. He simply wanted his history

I made my choices and set the curriculum at a delicate balancing point between the two poles of students in the class. I used a lot of spectrum exercises so they could see each other's diversity along many continua, but ultimately I let "queer" pass away in hopes that some of them will find her not in the well of loneliness, but in the *mayim chayyim*, the waters of life, that spring from Miriam's well. Some would judge me as a failure for having landed the curriculum between these opposing poles, and I will leave that judgment to the reader, or most appropriately, to the students themselves. I have colleagues that I very much respect, who expect the students to keep up with their curricular choices—like being thrown into the deep end of a pool—and these are neither better nor worse educators than I am, simply different.

What was wrong with my gaydar? Unfortunately, nothing. What was wrong were

my assumptions about why students take a class such as this. When the class was first taught in 1995, these topics were still so taboo within the student body that bigender and heterosexual students would have been a numerical minority in the course; but by 2008, they were the majority. This is a sea change that snuck up on me, but it has proved wrong the strongest arguments against identity-based curricula from neocons and fundamentalists. Even if they were ever intended to be, these courses are not recruiting grounds or ideological havens for the left, and if so, that function has proven a failure. Rather they have become academic, as attractive to the majority culture as most other subjects or methods of inquiry. Oddly, the same is true of Jewish American literature, a "safe" subject students sometimes take to meet their culture and gender diversity requirement, because they are wary of discussions of race or sexuality! How ironic for them when they encounter in my course former Black Panther Julius Lester's *Lovesong: On Becoming A Jew*, or the anthology *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish*, not to mention the cosmic twist of landing in the middle of the Holocaust in order to feel less uncomfortable about race or gender.

So what possible connection does the teaching of this course have to do with Stonewall? Why was I so insistent in asking my students to reflect upon the origin of their rights and freedoms? For me, many of the gifts of the course were in allowing them to taste the subtleties and textures of their lives. Audre Lorde (1984) in "The Uses of the Erotic" writes:

During World War II, we bought sealed plastic packets of white, uncolored margarine, with a tiny, intense pellet of yellow coloring perched like a topaz just inside the clear skin of the bag. We would leave the margarine out for a while to soften, and then we would pinch the little pellet to break it inside the bag, releasing the rich yellowness into the soft pale

mass of margarine. Then taking it carefully between our fingers, we would knead it gently back and forth, over and over, until the color had spread throughout the whole pound bag of margarine, thoroughly coloring it. I find the erotic such a kernel within myself.
(p. 57)

Oh, how they squirmed when I dragged them to this passage, terrified not of the sexuality implied, but of the *sensuality*.

They were the last class to purchase their textbooks from the soon-to-be-closed women's bookstore. In their world, every title is instantly available, and much more in the way of selection, but how much was passing away? On the last day of class they met Clela Rorex, Boulder's former county clerk, who in 1975 issued marriage licenses to five same sex couples decades before Denmark, Iowa, or Gavin Newsom. Their friendships across every line were breezy and effortless, with the exception of the Muslim student, who always sat outside the circle, and was visibly uncomfortable in any interactive exercise.

I do not seek nostalgia here, I seek waking. When I drew these students into my shell game, I wanted them to catch me, to up-end the table, and chase me down the street. And so I set up my con right outside the Stonewall Inn, a place outside which I once sat, in the middle of the street, not much older than they after staggering there from the Trans March and the Dyke March, drumming all night with the queerpunks at Stonewall's 25th.

Auspiciously, the 40th anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion corresponds in the Jewish calendar with the reading in the annual cycle of Torah portions of a mysterious and complex *parshah* (portion) called *Chukat*. The Israelites had arrived at the wilderness of Zin after forty years wandering in the desert, where the prophet Miriam dies and the people thirst for water. Their seemingly inexhaustible well, dependent on the merit of Miriam, has suddenly dried up.

Free from bondage, but still in part enslaved, the people long for the security of bread and water, for the certainty provided by *Mitzrayim*, the land of their enslavement, the narrow places. At Passover we say, "It was not enough to take the Jews out of *Mitzrayim*, it was necessary to take the narrow places out of the Jews."

Stonewall was a narrow place: a sliver of a bar under Mafia control and constant threat of police raid, populated by drag queens, hustlers, and homeless youth. Narrow, yes, until that night, 40 years ago, when Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, and so many other trans/queer people struck the rock that poured forth water, those waters "in the life." Yes, Stonewall has become a myth, neither the beginning nor the end, but people need myths as much as we need manna, water, and the shelter of the sky. In the biblical account, Moses learns that because he did not follow instructions to speak to the rock but instead struck it in anger, he would glimpse, but not enter, the promised land.

I take this to be the wrong lesson, the morality tale that silences the voice that says: "Enough!" "*Genug!*" "*¡Ya Basta!*" This is the voice so many are afraid to hear because the narrow places feel so secure, so appealing to our animal nature, to our defendable turf. But the myth is also wise beyond compare, because...really... none of us can ever but glimpse the Promised Land. The best a *bodhisattva* or a *tzadik* can hope for—much less those of us living the broken lives of the everyday—is to bring someone toward promise, to stand briefly on that mountain, and then go back for the next one.

I do not seek nostalgia, I seek waking.

In a numinous and rare teaching moment where one could feel the ground tremble with meaning, I asked my students, "Years from now, who will be freer because of the way you lived your lives?" Whether trans or not, queer or not, Jewish or not, a friend of Dorothy or not, *whoever you are*, I ask the same of us all.

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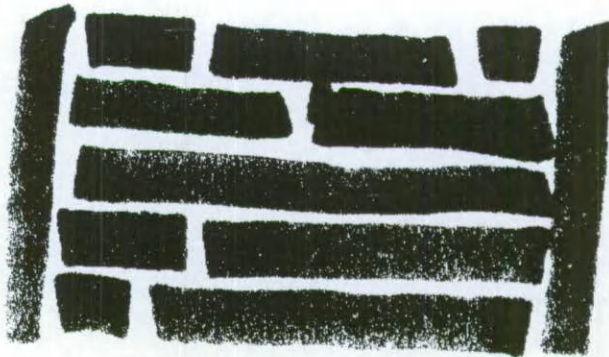
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(Footnotes)

¹ I regret you cannot meet these delightful people in their full dimension—I came to love them all, but, for reasons of anonymity must reduce them to “students.” It should be obvious enough that I learned as much from them as they me.

² How very queer there is one.



Call for Papers

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THE CONTRADICTIONS OF MULTICULTURAL RHETORIC AND ACADEMIC PRIVILEGE: THE TEACHER IS ALWAYS RIGHT

Hadidja Nyiransekuye, Ph.D., Metropolitan State College of Denver, and
Susan Manning, Ph.D., University of Denver

International students from post-colonial countries who further their education in the United States come with disadvantages from their cultural backgrounds. Their contribution to learning is marred by their experience of colonization and their collectivist views of the world. "Imbyino Nyir'urugo ateye niyo wikiriza." (Translation: The tune that the owner of the home starts is what you answer.) The host culture shapes scholarship based on Western traditions—precision, objectiveness, economy of style, etc.—that refute other cultural expressions and conceptualizations. A conversational model is used to disclose the privileges and oppressions that unfold in a professor/student relationship. The conversation reflects a desire for inclusiveness of multicultural scholarship at odds with long held practices of language hegemony and Western scholarship traditions.

Introduction

In Kinyarwanda, the language of Rwanda, we say, "*Ikinyoni kigurutse kitavuze bacyita icyana*," which means, "A bird that flies away with no say is labeled as a baby bird." As a former international Ph.D. student from Rwanda who now teaches undergraduate students (Hadidja), and her former faculty advisor who teaches in a doctoral program (Susan), we decided to write on issues of privilege because of some insights that came forward in our relationship together. It was obvious in the course of our work that there was an unconscious, and sometimes conscious, drive to shape discourse in certain ways deemed acceptable to earn the qualification of scholar in Western academia. And yet as social workers, we also value the discourse of multiculturalism; this was particularly relevant to the sub-Saharan African traditions brought forward through Hadidja's background. We experienced a contradiction between what we say we do and how we do it.

This conversation is a small contribution to the gap between our ideals and our practice, which we believe is impacted by the privilege that exists in academia and one type of oppression experienced by some international graduate students. This discussion cannot cover the complexity of international students'

experiences so we limit our conversation to the oppressive effects of colonization, using language as an instrument for rhetorical hegemony. Further, we discuss the impact of rhetorical hegemony on the learning process of international students and the multicultural pedagogy of social work. We argue that some academic practices and traditions actually contribute to a process of cultural homogenization, at the same time that the social work profession is seeking cultural pluralism.

We have discovered through our conversations together that issues of power and privilege exist in many different contexts in the teaching/learning relationship in academia. Privilege starts within the relationship between students and professors, is institutionalized within the hegemony of scientific traditions, and is promoted through the use of English as the dominant language. These themes are presented through the following conversation. The insights that have evolved for us through speaking together provide opportunities to re-distribute the power of privilege in academia toward a more inclusive model of scholarship and knowledge development.

The Privilege of Academic Literacy and the International Student

Hadidja: There are multiple layers of privileges and many more layers of oppression for international students. Some of us come from wealthy countries and wealthy families; others come from emerging economies with their own set of challenges. Others yet are non-traditional students coming from post-colonial systems with a variety of languages and cultures, which can be considered enriching or irrelevant to the American academic setting, depending on the evaluator of the content students bring with them. International students entering higher education in the United States come in with different support systems and their starting point is very different depending on the existence or lack of the support system in place for them. Those with a pre-existing niche of friends and other compatriots who have been through the system before them will fare better than those who do not have that niche. Students with prior travel experience to the United States will have an understanding that is different from those without prior travel experience. These prior experiences will set the scene for a conscious decision to adhere to the norms of the place or to bring in one's worldview and maintain it.

Susan: For me, the realization of my privilege as one of your "evaluators" became clearer to me in the past few years. I think some insight evolved through our work together, but also before, when I've worked with other international students, and advised other students with diverse cultural experiences. I've been aware that you bring a different lens of scholarship from that expected here in our school. I've also been aware of my actions in shaping your scholarship - your thinking, the way you write, your approach - so that it fits in with institutional standards of scholarship. I have had the authority to accept or reject your ideas and how you represent those ideas. I worked with students who I knew were bringing unique cultural narratives and perspectives, and then found myself reshaping or refocusing those narratives. I began to recognize what was being lost - the meaningful knowledge you bring from a different cultural lens. It wasn't

like a light bulb as much as a growing sense of unease. Yet, I felt ambivalent because it seemed I had to help shape your scholarship in order for you to succeed and do what was necessary to complete the Ph.D.

Then, in preparation for work in our doctoral program, I read some of the findings from the Carnegie Foundation about the formation of scholars. A quotation really stood out, "...scholarship segregated is scholarship impoverished" (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008, p.10). They argue that the cultures of Ph.D. programs must be participatory and fair, and that there is a "hidden curriculum" that becomes embedded in the culture that conveys powerful messages about what students can create, what risks to take, and what scholarly activity is possible. The authors also argue that there is a "shadow side" to our graduate education - the "deeply ingrained traditions" that are not visible and rarely challenged - that restrict education from the development of diversity and varied strategies that would strengthen our intellectual communities in this rapidly changing, multicultural world (p. 20). I think these traditions related to scholarship are a form of privilege - a power over you that has impacted your experience of making your own unique cultural contributions.

Hadidja: Yes, in the process of you helping the student to fit into what the academic process expects from them, a side of them is lost. They lose their voice. I remember one time I was talking to a fellow student from China who commented, "Sometimes I feel like I do not know who I am anymore. I have lost a piece of me while trying to be what they want me to be." It would be like having a basket full of beans that are multiple colors but you've decided that you only need the black colored beans. So the other colors, even though they are beans also, don't fit with the ones that you already have. I think from the perspective of an international student there is an uneasiness of realizing you want to be an academically accepted, educated student the way that fits with what has been modeled to you, and yet leaving behind the other aspect of you that does not fit in, that doesn't have any room. It feels like a little death of self in

someway. Rwandans say, “*Ingendo y’undi iravuna*” – “Try to imitate someone else’s walk style and you will hurt yourself in the process.”

When you and I were working on my refugee study, you kept telling me to “narrow it down, focus, and narrow it down.” And I was thinking, “If I keep narrowing it down, I’m going to completely lose the context of what I’m telling you.” It was not going to make sense outside of the whole experience. As Ann Weick (1999) pointed out: “For social work, context is all-important” (p.330). I remember you telling me, “Keep coming back to your research question.” I, on the other hand, was thinking that if I kept thinking about how I was answering my research question there was a whole aspect of what I think was important in the understanding of the refugee experience that went beyond the research question.

Susan: Yes, I remember distinctly those conversations, after you had done quite a bit of data analysis. You really argued strongly that you couldn’t possibly capture the phenomenon without bringing in the participants’ histories and experiences as refugees prior to receiving services here in this country; it was the contextual aspects of what they had experienced before coming here that had everything to do with their experience here. The traditions informing my work with you negated your cultural traditions that were essential to your scholarship. So I was participating in a form of cultural hegemony (Askeland & Payne, 2006).

I can see now a form of academic hegemony based on a long history of traditions and norms that are no longer explicit or transparent. Turner (2003, p.187) provides a helpful historical perspective when she tracks academic literacy through a construction all the way back to the “supremely rational Cartesian ‘cogito’ - that of an ideal observer, whose observations must be precise and ‘objective’; and a relationship of mastery between ‘men’ and knowledge, particularly European ‘men’ and its others.” She presents the history of the “classical episteme,” as having a focus on “clarity” and a “scientist’s discipline of language reduction.” She also points out Einstein’s and Newton’s “minute precision,” and the emphasis on “a visibilising

economy of style” (pp. 187 – 190). She argues that through these norms, “...the reader is led along a route of clearly identified argumentation, without detour and distraction” (p.190). These rhetorical strategies become a ‘disciplining technology for language use and language users....academic writers are subjected into this visibilising economy’ (190).

So when you think about our work together on your dissertation, with me as your advisor, were there times that you felt like you knew what needed to be brought forward and I didn’t? And would you, could you have said, “You’re wrong about this,” or “I think this is the only way to present this”? You did do some of that.

Hadidja: Yeah, I did some of that. Because I think one of the reasons I argued strongly about some of the things is because this wasn’t only an academic topic, this was my life. I either was going to be saying it the way I felt about it or I was not going to say it at all. I cared strongly about it because it wasn’t just another topic: globalization or money woes and Wall Street. No, it was my life. So that touched a part of me that was beyond academia; that made a huge difference and the fact that you were receptive. On the other hand, if you remember I kept saying, “Do you think this will ever look like a dissertation?” I was worried about it because it was my life, it was my emotions, it was about the people who worked through the same thing that I did, things that I dreamt about, nightmares that I went through. I was worried because the other pieces of writing you find in academia are dry; it’s statistics—there were 10 women who did this and 20 men who did this—and mine did not sound like that at all. My worry was more about, “It doesn’t sound academic.” Coming from a collectivist society background, I still have a tendency to change my primary behavior and way of doing things in an attempt to adjust to social situations (Cross, 1995; Weisz et al., 1984; Yang, 1986, as cited by Yeh, Arora, Wu, 2007). In this case it was important that I emulate the writing approach that is predominant in academia.

Susan: Yes. Okay. But that element of your emotions did make a difference in breaking through your reluctance to disagree.

When you say "sound academic," what do you mean? What were you thinking it should look like?

Hadidja: It needed to look like other dissertations. When an American student wrote about Japanese resiliency, I thought, "She's not Japanese." So I should be able to work on a topic that I am not so involved with. I felt like I was going native. Going native sounds very negative in terms of academic work, and I was so native it didn't sound very academic.

Susan: Well, I don't think you were going native. That would imply you were stepping out of the researcher role and into the role of your participants. You were an insider, but you really were invested in bringing forward these findings in a systematic, scientific way which is academic. But there is a prejudice in academia about qualitative research; many in academia would argue that qualitative methods are not really scientific. A majority of students and faculty only consider positivist, quantitative approaches to be real research because this paradigm meets the criteria Turner (2003) described in the history of academia literacy. It's another element of the academic culture about what is valued and expected. I think you are describing the experience of cultural hegemony, where power is imposed by the majority through ideas and structures that are viewed as perfectly natural and are supposedly for our own good academically (Brookfield, 1995, as cited by Askeland & Payne, 2006). However, this culture is constructed and brought forward in order to protect the status quo that serves traditional academic interests.

I never felt that you lost your perspective about it, but I understand that you were immersed in it, as any qualitative researcher must be. You were the only one who could make the interpretations that you did, because of your profound understanding of your participants' experience, based on your cultural participation (Douglas, 1976). So that was a painful process for you because you had to reflect on your own experience and then step out of it in the process of making your interpretations. And I think you did that beautifully but with a tremendous amount of pain. I mean, it was very hard.

Hadidja: It was very hard. It was very hard. I needed to know from you that it was okay to think that way and that the research would meet academic standards.

Susan: I can see embedded in your experience the impact of the norms and traditions of academic privilege related to who decides what is scientific language. The presentation of qualitative findings, for example, is scientific, and yet clearly cannot be represented through an economy of language and reduction in style. Qualitative research emphasizes rich description: bringing forward the meanings and essence of the refugee experience of your participants and making the connections to all the complex variations of their experience, as well as the context where it was experienced. And, as this approach becomes more valued and integrated into social work, it opens the door to more meaningful cultural interpretations of human experience. But, based on our work together, I imagine that you learned about academic literacy differently from most American students.

Colonization and the International Student: The Dual Heritage

Hadidja: Yes. Where I come from, Rwanda specifically, before these formal Western forms of education, the way we learned is by doing. You sat with your mother or you sat with an older cousin or you sat with your grandmother and you would be told stories. And it was through those stories that there might be some application at some particular point, but it wasn't about "So what did you learn from that story?" It wasn't about picking and choosing from that story one element, it was the whole story; it was the beauty of knowing and contextualizing whatever you are going to be learning in that story.

For example, on a trip you take with a cousin, the time you've spent together and the unfolding experiences during the trip all have the same value for the experience to be complete. African women tend to be involved in agriculture tasks. Even if they are involved in trading, their lives evolve around their communal work; they work together; they have

fun together, they go to the field together . Rwandans say, "*Haganira ababagaranye*," which means "Those who can converse are those who are weeding together." For two or three women to be able to talk, to have a meaningful conversation, they need that space. The idea of "*kubagara*," which is weeding, takes time; it's tedious, and you have to be very careful because you do not want to remove the good seed, you want only to remove the weeds. You have a broad context where you're disclosing to your friends or to people working with you; you do not even see it coming. It flows into the work. Without realizing this, whether it is the "*kubagara*," the weeding, or the "*kuboha*," the weaving, women are doing physical work with their hands, but there is a mental aspect to it, an emotional aspect to it, that allows you to disclose and that eases the hardship of the work you are doing. And by the time you are at the end of your work, you have "killed multiple birds with one stone."

Susan: So you're saying that learning happens through relationships, in the course of everyday life, and it is reciprocal. And relationship, by its nature, involves knowing. I'm also thinking that this kind of learning happens over time, and takes time.

Hadidja: Yes. My informal education is the domain of the family and friends and the neighbors. The formal education is a domain that belongs to that "White man" school. This is going to be interrelated with the idea of colonization. It's the colonizer who brought formal education. The Germans in Rwanda, and later on the Belgians, did occupy the land, but also took on our minds and ways of thinking, setting the stage for rhetorical hegemony and privilege in scholarship. Colonization is a process of taking over a land and arbitrarily imposing outside language and practices to the native population. It also involves gradual dismissal and eradication of our native sociopolitical structures. There is no colonization of land anymore, but the impact of imported languages and the globalization that came with market economies has continued. It has taken on a higher level of rhetorical hegemony in which certain cultures like the United States, unwittingly or consciously, have taken over the

rest of the world. Colonization is usually done through the imposition of a language, which becomes a non-negotiable vehicle and ticket to progress of any kind. One of my friends used to say, "*Ukwigishije ururimi abaguhatse*," meaning "He who teaches you his or her language controls what you do and how you think." It is through language that people share their ideas and their mental process co-creating the world around them (Gergen, 2001).

Our parents were not involved with that formal education because they have been told that they do not know what they are doing, that what they were doing was backwards, savage, and unacceptable. Also, they did not speak the language of the colonizers so they could not even decide on the content of the curricula of their children's education, because that was the prerogative of the colonizers. This is important, both from the point of view that the parents could not be involved in the education of their children because it was not something that they knew how to do, and also that they were not a part of the discussion of the western conceptual view of the world. For those of us who were trained in French philosophical view of the world we heard statements like "*Ce que l'on conçoit bien s'énonce clairement et les mots pour le dire viennent aisément*," (Boileau, French poet of 17th century), meaning, "What is conceived well is enunciated clearly and the words to express it come easily."

One has to remember that Rwandan children, like other colonized children, had two conceptual worlds that competed in relation to the learning experience: the traditional informal world from the parents and the imported world from the colonizer. To be able to use the imported language to express a concept, you needed to be able to have a mental process that matched the western way of conceptualizing the world. If the mental process is in your native language, then it is a challenge to be able to translate that concept in a language that is imported, and does not take into consideration the nuances of your native language (Takahashi as cited by Tsuda, 2007). It has been a long held belief that the inability to make that transition was because

"French was the language of universal human reason and had the power to civilize people who spoke it" (Kasuya, 2001, p. 168). This certainly leads to self-deleting or self-erasing of one's identity by espousing the colonizing language and mannerisms, as one wants to appear civilized and capable of mastering the conceptual world of the colonizer (Turner, 2003)

Susan: And so what did that mean for you then?

Hadidja: What that means is the formal education belongs to your teacher. It is the teacher who knows what he or she wants you to learn and you better listen without question and absorb as much as you can.

Susan: So...your voice is non-existent? It's only what the teacher wants to hear; that is the only voice you can really have. And so when you think about your experience in the doctoral program, was it immediately obvious to you that your voice didn't matter?

Hadidja: When you are colonized and you are in your home country there are things that you internalize. You are told or shown the way things are done and that's the way to go. Now when you come to America, you go from complete disorientation and confusion to the realization that you need to shift gears and learn a completely different set of how to do things. You are not introduced to how those things work, because there is an assumption that everybody entering the program went through the same American educational system. Pointing out to your professor that you were trained differently would be admitting that you are not qualified to attend the program. You cannot question the assumption; you cannot even figure out if you have a say because for a long time you were not allowed to say anything. And it becomes a puzzle. You are coming here with a complete set of values, another way of doing things, and there is no bridge. In my case, that situation was twice as challenging because I was coming from a Muslim family where it is frowned upon for a woman to challenge the rules of the house. In my collectivist society, self-effacing is preferred to self-affirming (Yeh, Arora, & Wu, 2007).

Susan: I think you're identifying an important point about privilege. Educators in the United States have little insight about the importance of our past roles as "rulers," whereas you have a heightened awareness of your past oppression through colonization (Askeland & Payne, 2006, p.733). I can only relate in terms of my own non-traditional experience moving into academia. I dropped out of school when I was just a kid. I traveled around the country doing migrant work, and had three children in the process. I ended up getting a GED, which is like an equivalent of a high school degree, but it's not really. It's just that you have to be smart enough to answer the questions; but you miss a lot of content that you would have in formal high school classes. I went to a state college and earned an associates degree. I was admitted to the masters program in social work without a bachelor's degree because of my professional work experience. So I didn't have a high school degree or a bachelor's degree; I had equivalencies. I did fine; I actually received the outstanding student award when I graduated. And, interestingly, I feel a need to say that. But I remember feeling a stigma that I was the only one listed in the graduation program without a bachelor's degree by my name. Clearly, educational credentials, not equivalencies, were highly valued. I, also, wanted to be what was expected in academia, as you have said about colonization. And, I assumed that what was expected was right. So in some ways I have experienced a parallel process, but from a position related to social class within Western academia. Ann Weick (1999) talks about "guilty knowledge" as a process where we learn to keep private things about ourselves that are really "a grounding of our knowledge in our own experience..." (p. 328). We learn to develop filters about what can be shared. The knowledge that we develop from our childhood experiences and from your experiences in a different cultural group end up "...on the bottom rung" (p. 329).

I think I always perceived students and their work somewhat differently, perhaps because of that different educational experience. In my role as a professor, I have developed a different view. It's not by accident

that my research has been qualitative, and focused on empowerment and professional ethics. Both have to do with the distribution of power and how it impacts others. I have responded to existing academic standards with a responsibility to "do it right" for myself and for students. So I've had both the privilege of the vested authority but also my own oppression as a woman and a non-traditional student. It's interesting how hard this is for me to reveal overtly in the academic culture. It's been easier for me to come out as a lesbian to students and faculty than to say that I didn't graduate from high school. And so this really feels like guilty knowledge, and also fits with our discussion about privilege and oppression. There are all these layers. However, throughout my own life and educational process, I had the opportunities to change it. I made many wrong decisions; I've thought I could have known better, so maybe my oppression was not the same as your experience of colonization. But, as a colleague has noted, structures can limit our choices that we make and as we internalize the structure, it limits our choices even further (E.W. alls, Personal communication, October 4, 2009).

Hadidja: See, coming from a colonized system has a particular flavor of being underprivileged in itself. When you came as a "less-than" type of student, you think you could have made other choices and if you wanted you could work hard, make up for the time you lost, and regain the status that was expected of a white woman who is capable, but did not use her full potential. I came from a system that was a three year bachelor degree system but with a lot of years of experience in the field, working the ground, working with village people, those kinds of things. So when I came, the first reaction from the people evaluating my academic transcript was that I needed a fourth year I was thinking, "A fourth year? Why would I need a fourth year after 19 years of teaching and working in the field?" And so you get into that mode of thinking that what *they* said actually carries more weight than what I think and cannot express. Someone has said I needed it, so someone else's voice is always stronger than mine. And as it has been my experience that everybody

is always right except me. If someone had pushed too much, I do not think I could have made a case for myself.

I was lacking, not because I made a poor choice, but I actually belong to that category of "half devil, half child" (Kipling, 19th century) who cannot do anything to catch up. When I was growing up, parents who thought it was a waste of time and money for their children to go to school used to say, "*Uriga se ngo uzatware umusozi?*" "Why bother with school if you will never rule on the land?" It was believed that there was a category of people born to rule and others who are born to serve the ruling class. There was a class of the "capable" and a class of the "incapable." So you invested in education only because you were called by your class to be a ruler later on. But if by birth you will never be a ruler, then getting an education was a waste of time and money.

Susan: So, colonizing...that's a new word for me. It's a new way of thinking about things because I guess I am one of the colonizers and didn't realize it. Educational colonialism does claim that the "colonizers' universal knowledge" is superior to the knowledge of cultures that have been colonized, which is marginalizing and devalues what you know (Askeland & Payne, 2006, p. 734). It seems like what results is internalized oppression; you focus on what you think you don't know in response to what is valued by the academic community, rather than what you have to contribute differently: your unique voice. I did not understand your post-colonial experience when we worked together, but I think I understand it now. How did language impact your experience?

The Privilege of Language

Hadidja: People look at me twice and wonder where I came from, what that accent is. People already decide that they do not understand what I am saying because I speak with an accent.

Susan: And what was that experience like for you in terms of course work and classes and relationships within higher education?

Hadidja: So I come in with an accent. I already know I did not speak like everybody

else because there were jokes I could not participate in. I cannot remember what it was, someone said something about Judge Judy. I didn't have a clue who Judge Judy was. And everybody was laughing in the classroom, and I could not laugh, and I could not ask because I did not want to embarrass myself even more by asking who Judge Judy was. Another time it was something about *Roe vs. Wade*, and again I did not know what that was about and did not ask.

Susan: Right, because you don't want to be seen as not knowing. . . .

Hadidja: It was supposed to be joke for everybody. But it was not to me. And so I found myself acting in a way that now feels like self-discrimination, because the minute I realized that there was something that everybody else knew and understood, and I was the only person who did not, did I want to acknowledge that I'm stupid? Or did I want to keep quiet and let it pass?

Susan: Which reduces the learning and discovery for everyone. So, coming from a different culture and lacking fluency in our language and culture makes it so much more difficult to participate fully. And I think there is something in the academic culture that reinforces that sense of, "You should know what you're talking about" or, "You should know what other people are talking about" even if you are from somewhere else. I'm just guessing about this, but I'm guessing that you don't feel like what you bring, that what you do know, which I can guarantee you they don't know, is not something. . . .

Hadidja: ... That has room. No, it doesn't. There's no space for me to know what they don't because that is not relevant. Social work is a very policy and culture driven profession. For me to understand and contribute to the discussion, it has to be based on something I can relate to - background information either from my life or from previous classes. Every American student has heard about homelessness, social services, juvenile delinquency, drug use and abuse, eviction notices, school social work, mental health facilities, rehab, recreation centers, and all the jargon that is in the news everyday. You do not jump into a discussion about this topic if

you need to be told what they are in the first place. You may have information on how things work in other places of the world, but that is not part of the discussion. Or if it is, things are not regulated in the same way they are here. What I know that the professors themselves do not even know doesn't count.

Susan: Why doesn't it count?

Hadidja: Because you've been brought up to believe that what they know is what counts. What you know - actually, you don't even think about what you know. You always think about what you don't know. Part of living the legacy of colonization of the mind is that constant need for outside validation. Anything that you may know that is valid, when they ask you to speak, you actually set yourself up, because you decide that you don't have anything to say. What you say doesn't count. People wonder why those African women, and in some of countries of the Middle East, women still choose to stay behind the veil. Even when you ask them to speak, they have been so used to not saying anything that they actually believe they don't have anything to say. What would I say?

Colonization of the mind is a horrible thing because it puts you in that position of never, never trusting yourself. You wouldn't even think about trusting yourself; it doesn't exist in your vocabulary. There is a book, *Infidel*, in which the author talks about Muslim women being behind the veil for so long that in the end, they are hiding, not only their physical self, but also get to that point where even when they removed that veil, they have ceased to exist even in their mind. They have disappeared even in their mind.

Susan: On the other hand, your experience really enriched the findings of your dissertation as you integrated Rwandan language, sayings, and cultural meanings into your dissertation. I learned so much from the way you framed the conceptual ideas through the women's voices within the context of African culture and their previous experiences as refugees fleeing from the genocide. Only you could do that; it had to flow from your cultural understanding and perspective.

Hadidja: Yes, and I do that a lot with my students. Some of them like it, some of them

don't. They think I'm taking them all over the place, and I can understand their anxiety because I primarily think in Kinyarwanda. When I get into the heart of explaining some concepts in class, I go from Kinyarwanda and that's how the word will come out. Usually what I am saying will be a concept of how we view the world. When I translate it in English, it really loses its full meaning; it loses it because I am bringing my view of the world to the students who cannot relate to that way of looking at the world. Therefore, it can be confusing; it can also be enriching for those who are accepting of it.

There is an assumption that the international students are taught for their market at home. I was trained in my own culture and then in this culture, so find myself going back and forth between the two. I am afraid of losing that side of me, and yet I struggle in fitting into the new role that I have here, because now I have to cater to an American public, American students, and I have to speak the language they speak - shifting my thinking to fit their thinking.

Susan: Yes, and it sounds like another form of oppression: the teacher waiting for her wisdom to be accepted by the dominant white student culture. You bring that Rwandan point of view, which enriches the learning of your American students in ways not possible with an American instructor.

Hadidja: I was wondering if I consider myself as privileged, able to understand a little bit of both worlds. It's enriching if you want to look at it that way but is that a privilege? Are some of the students receiving it that way? Students resist it if they think, "I don't think that way. You should be teaching us the way everybody else teaches us." It has been enriching for a student who says, "I like it when you use those metaphors, those Rwandan metaphors." It can be perceived either way.

Susan: I'm just trying to relate to it from my own experience as an educator; that decision about how much to disclose that is different from what the student expects. For me to disclose something like, "I was a teenage migrant worker," might chip away at that privilege I carry based on academic traditions. So I can understand that it's a risk to bring

your Rwandan culture into the classroom and expect students to connect with you about it and apply it to their own learning.

Hadidja: It comes down to credibility. You want to be credible as an academician, right? They say, "Thank you for sharing your story" I perceive the term "story" as taking away the credibility of being a strong academician. I feel like telling them, "Conceptualize in my way of thinking - what I understand," and, "This is what I would like for you to get out of it." When they call it a story, for me it takes away that credibility of being a strong academician.

Susan: It lets you know that they do not really understand what you are bringing forward; they are thinking of it as a story - rather than your life, your world view, your culture. You are exposing them to as a different way of conceptualizing what takes place in the world. A "story" can be a way of dismissing it as an interesting anecdote, rather than something that has a conceptual significance to their own life and their own learning. I think there is a dismissing of the importance of the multicultural information that is unconscious and unintentional.

Hadidja: Very unintentional, and probably unconscious. And of course, when you are an outsider like I am, trying to fit in, and actually completely buying into these colonized minds, of course you want to be that thing that they are expecting. But you can't totally give up who you are.

Susan: You feel like an outsider: first as an international student, then as an educator, coming from another country. Hickling-Hudson (2006) captures the injustice of the experience you are describing as, "...the only way the marginalized will receive education justice is to fight for it, but...their fight is hindered by the exclusions they have suffered" (p. 214). You are identifying a complicated form of oppression that is difficult to address.

The other thing that I started thinking about was the term ESL (English as a Second Language) students when referencing international students. I started thinking about you and the number of languages in which you are fluent. How many languages do you speak?

Hadidja: Four. English is not my second... (laughing), it's my fourth language; that's the one I learned last (laughing).

Susan: So, talking about cultural hegemony, this seems like a perfect example: the underlying assumption that if anybody speaks a language other than their country of origin, it's going to be English. You come to this country with fluency in all of these different languages, and the way that it is received here is in relation to your ability to speak and write English in a scholarly way, rather than the contribution to multicultural understanding you bring with you. Unfortunately, in academia there is an underlying assumption that language expression should be clear and "...not draw attention to itself" (Turner, 2003, p. 190). When attention is drawn to language through the use of a second language (or fourth in your case) or for those who are new to the "cultural practice of academic literacy," then you are placed in "deficit" (2003, p. 190). The overlapping of language use and rationality results in your being perceived as having a deficit in academic literacy; you are viewed as having a deficiency in your thinking ability as well as a deficiency in English (Turner, 2003). I think that is what you are identifying.

Hadidja: Yes, if you can't write fluently in English, you are not academically acceptable. I have a student who is from North Africa and he most likely speaks Arabic in his home and I think it is one of the French speaking countries, and so the student is struggling. When he came here, they evaluated him for English fluency through the TOEFL, a test of English as a foreign language. He passed, but the passing of the TOEFL is very mechanical and technical. It doesn't take into consideration all of the other aspects of learning he needs to be able to go into a classroom and follow all the complex concepts that are explained in English. So the way he is writing and responding, or even trying to participate in class, is completely disjointed. I'm finding myself very, very torn. Do I consider this student someone who needs extra help? Do I give him more time, because at least I'm lucky that I speak the other language he speaks? Can I allow him to write in the language he

feels more comfortable? Does he need to go through the whole mechanism of what a student who is disabled will do? But, he's not disabled.

Susan: Yes. To present his ideas in his own language...because involvement in an educational experience in a foreign language makes students feel inferior, and less competent. So the lack of fluency in the language used in the educational process ends up excluding that student from full participation, which leads to an inability to learn and know in his own context (Askeland & Payne, 2006). This is just what you have described about your own experience as a student. Limbu (2009), at a conference on privilege I attended, said that treating ESL writing differences as an error, not as a rhetorical choice, treats students as in colonization.

Hadidja: English is the language of learning here. When a student has difficulty writing, even in English, we send him to the writing center. This student, who is struggling with the language, was trained in writing in a completely different language. The way he formulates his sentences, he is translating, and losing some pieces of the sentence to make it complete.

Susan: International students don't have that opportunity to use their own language and meanings here; we take that opportunity away. We say you must present your ideas in English. And of course, the paradox of this expectation is that you have to find a way to present your contribution to knowledge in a way that will be accepted and valued by the rest of the scholarly community without losing your cultural voice.

For students who are working on a Ph.D. and want to be educators who will want to contribute to the professional literature in English, this becomes a puzzle, as you noted earlier. How much do I take away from their presentation of ideas based on their own language and their own cultural experience? At the same time, I want to help them present those ideas in a way that they will be accepted and integrated into the fabric of the professional community. And I don't have an answer about it. The idea of "mastering the master" 's

language” has long been important for people to become empowered in post-colonial societies (Turner, 2003). But, developing your proficiency does not negate the opportunity to use it in a way that integrates your cultural language and understandings into your work, as you did in your dissertation. That becomes a form of transculturalism (Turner, 2003).

One aspect that felt better to me as you and I were talking about your dissertation was that the more we talked about these issues (and I think we talked about them indirectly I don't think we really hit it head-on), it seemed to me that you began to feel – and I'll use the word “permission” to bring in your language and sayings from your life in Rwanda. I think it is here that we get into issues of privilege. I was in a position of power over you as your advisor. I mean, as a faculty I had tremendous power. How do you think this impacted the issues of multiculturalism?

Cultural Homogenization and Critical Pedagogy

Hadidja: I think cultural hegemony is the tendency of either consciously or unconsciously preferring the norms and behaviors that are common in one culture over the norms and behaviors that are foreign to the dominant culture's traits. So my cultural traits and characteristics are either ignored or not given a chance to be manifested. There is a recognition of your culture and an unconscious dismissal of mine. We're not conscious about what's going on. We've lived with it for so long that we do not even think about it anymore; that is the way it builds up. The system claims to want diversity and create diversity, but doesn't go beyond the idea of diversity. It doesn't go beyond the statistics that show diversity. For example, we have three Black women, we have one disabled woman, we have one who's older than 55, you know. The system does not ask the questions about what are the needs. Are we ready to accept what these diverse people bring with them? What does that mean? How does that translate in terms of making these students' academic experience successful and meaningful?

Susan: Yes, the multicultural rhetoric supports our social work values; we believe in it, and we want to promote it, but changing the way we do things in regard to scholarship so that those cultural differences have a place is difficult. There is a risk of blending cultural contributions into scholarship that subverts the uniqueness, homogenizes rather than highlights the differences. Ann Weick (1999) has argued that there is a value in exploring subjugated knowledge because of the opportunity to identify and understand the “...power dimensions of knowledge development” (p. 329). What people from marginalized groups such as yourself know is knowledge that is not valued in the “monolithic paradigm” of scientific knowledge, so there is a silencing effect to your voice. Weick states that, “...the oppression of knowledge is double-layered: its inherent value is denied and those who might wish to claim it are intimidated into silence (p.329). So your question about whether we are prepared to hear different cultural contributions is important. Multiculturalism can only exist if we, as academic faculty, help to create a space and a value for the diverse contributions and ways of knowing from students such as you. The universalizing of language is also contributing to cultural homogenization along with the cultural oppression that occurs when multicultural rhetoric is not viewed as substantive and important in the development of social work knowledge.

It's helpful to read about some of the new approaches to pedagogy that may make a difference with this issue. Critical pedagogy brings in the role of power in the production of knowledge, and argues that the purpose of social work education is the “emancipation of oppressed groups” (Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005, p. 2). This approach seeks to distribute the power more evenly between teachers and students. In order to truly integrate multicultural content, some of it must come from international students such as you, with the language and meanings intact. Saleebey and Scanlon (2005, p. 8) argue that we must examine the “status-based hierarchies and roles” in the classroom in order to make

change. How did you experience the power between us?

Hadidja: Well, I think a critical pedagogy is a teaching method that allows the students to be critical of what and how they are being taught. It leaves room for students' input and encourages criticism during the learning process. The way that I experienced power between us though, would be power in the sense of empowerment. You, as an insider, have that power embedded in your position to help me, as an outsider, get in. I like the idea of opening the door from the inside for the outsiders to come in, as opposed to trying to push the door open from the outside because nobody is going to open it for you.

Susan: Yes. Okay. So connect that then to what you were feeling about how you and I worked together?

Hadidja: You knew more than I do. You knew some of the politics that I didn't; I'm behind the door and you were inside that door. When you're inside the door, you know the feasibility of things. You know which strategies can be acceptable and which ones will not be acceptable. You knew what type of material I could bring that would get me in, and you knew which kind of material would not get me in. That's the ally side of the person helping the underprivileged, and using your position as a privileged person to lift up those who are in a less privileged position.

I'm thinking of a man I worked with some years ago. He thought I was very open-minded, that I was very smart, that I spoke English, so he didn't need to have a translator. He was working in post-genocide Rwanda and emotions were really raw, and there were killings still going on. Of course, he was worried but he was this young, bright, idealistic American and wanted to save us all. When I quit my job at Care International and went back into teaching, I was going to be making less than \$100 a month. He suggested I go work for him because I could make much more money. He said, "The money I pay my chauffeur could pay your salary as a teacher for a year." I knew he was right but I was not a good addition to his staff. I came from the wrong group. People were saying that my "stupid American friend was a CIA agent."

This type of suspicion could have been enough for the government to ask him to leave Rwanda, and yet he was doing wonderful work. He worked with these families that had taken on children that they had found on the street; they were building homes for them; they were distributing crops for them to farm. He needed to be working with someone from the Tutsi group, someone who came from the tribe that the government trusts, in order for them to trust him. This is what I mean by "the insider." The Tutsis were back in power. So that was the same thing you were doing with me.

Susan: OK. So you're saying I was on the "right side" in terms of someone who was trusted in the academic setting. Is that right?

Hadidja: Yes, that's very right. If you're in an oppressed group or you are underprivileged, it may take a longer time for your voice to come through, longer than if you had an ally from the privileged group. And I think that happens in many other spheres too.

Susan: I think that I and many other faculty in their own private quiet ways work with international students and with other students who come from different cultural perspectives in these individual relationships as allies, you know really trying to support your voice - your cultural knowledge. It happens in these individual relationships, but it doesn't get institutionalized; it doesn't happen in an overt way, it happens in a covert way through all of these individual relationships. Subsequently, valuing of diversity in language and cultural knowledge doesn't happen easily or openly at the institutional level, at the level of the department or the level of the university. There is a lot of rhetoric intellectually but "the way we do things around here," the institutional culture, is to continue the traditional academic practices and standards that can exclude different voices. The result is a reinforcement of cultural homogeneity - in research, knowledge development, and curriculum, which we have been discussing.

Daniel (2008) argues that our liberal pluralist approach to multiculturalism in education does understand and celebrate diversity, but doesn't really explain or critique how our everyday practices promote or foster

domination of others and also within the academy. I think this is what the feminist bell hooks (1994) was arguing when she said, "When education is a practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess" (p. 21). As faculty, we have to develop a critical pedagogy that examines our own practices.

Hadidja: It's very true. You've got to build from those individual relationships into a network.

Susan: Kind of a collaborative approach – a partnership.

Hadidja: Yes, one little thing gets attached to the other one and every piece is added to the other one because it is something that can be more useful and more powerful than individual actions.

Susan: And, it implies a sense of unity about valuing some of the same things. I think that's not there yet.

Conclusion

Those of us who are colonized and those of us who are colonizers, first of all, have to have some insight about it, some realization that this is a process within which we are actors, and develop a consciousness about it. Motivation is important in order to try to understand the causes and consequences and work toward justice, an equalizing in the distribution of power between teachers and students. Friere argues that liberatory education requires that there has to be a process of *conscientization* for learners and teachers: that we have to help learners with awareness of inequalities so that the situation can be changed. This process can only occur through teachers and learners talking and resolving the issues together, rather than through what Friere calls the "banking method" of education where teachers only transfer knowledge to students (Freire, Freire, & Macedo, 1998, cited in Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005). Faculty who teach in graduate education must act as allies to "open the door from the inside" to international students so that their voices and contribution become part of social work knowledge.

We cannot ignore that we live in a global world that requires acknowledgement and integration of the contributions of every culture.

As Weick (1999, p. 328) noted in referencing Thomas Kuhn: "The net is never expansive enough. There are always facts and experiences that the current paradigm does not adequately capture or simply misses." We educate international students who should be able to take their education back to their home, without making their homes extensions of America. Also, international students who choose to remain in this country will contribute to the multicultural understanding of people here. Providing a window for those long oppressed voices to be heard is the true democracy we have advocated in social work all along.

Faculty can move to institute transparency shedding light on the "shadow side" of graduate education and examining openly the hegemony embedded in the academic propensity toward clarity and the "norms" that go with it (Turner, 2003; Walker et al., 2008). These covert values have to be recognized and made visible, and critiqued through open dialogue among and between faculty and students. It is a good time to optimize openly that "what is valued academically, epistemologically, and ontologically varies between countries and cultures" and make use of this variation to strengthen the academic traditions in the United States (Askeland & Payne, 2006, p. 739). Students can be encouraged to use a transcultural lens, integrating their experiences, language, and cultural particularities into their research, writing, and personal practice paradigms (Mullen, 1983; 1988).

Graduate students of the future need to be diverse in all kinds of ways "...to ensure a wide range of viewpoints that enrich intellectual exchange." In that way new and different approaches and models can be developed that support the intellectual community of academia and its future representatives (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008, p. 126). The dangers of cultural homogenization can only be addressed through these multicultural voices that bring new perspectives, languages, meanings, and understandings to the international community. As Weick argues, "...guilty knowledge is dangerous knowledge. It is knowledge that sits at the edge of the

dominant knowledge paradigm, insistently challenging the assumptions about the value of what we know" (p. 329). Doctoral education can use the knowledge and experiences of international students to address and critique the academic episteme that produces a re-enactment of the past rather than new models that create innovative, multicultural scholarship for the 21st century. Social work education should not be the place where post-colonial international students experience education as one more experience of losing their voice. Teachers are not always right.

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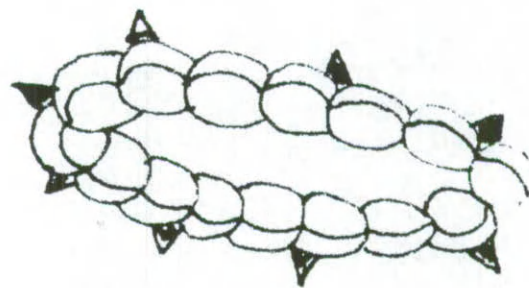
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PUTTING PRIVILEGE INTO PRACTICE THROUGH "INTERSECTIONAL REFLEXIVITY:" RUMINATIONS, INTERVENTIONS, AND POSSIBILITIES

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Engaging in intersectional reflexivity requires one to acknowledge one's intersecting identities, both marginalized and privileged, and then employ self-reflexivity, which moves one beyond self-reflection to the often uncomfortable level of self-implication. This complex process may move critically minded people, both scholars and citizens, beyond individualized politics and expand our accountability from self, to others and self, creating possibilities for coalitional activism targeted toward broad-based social change. Further, privileged scholars should advocate for coalition building in cautious and reflexive ways that complement rather than appropriate the intellectual labor of scholars of color, who have long called for more intersectionality and critical self-reflexivity within the academy.

Academically and personally, my goal is to connect theory and activism in ways that will have positive, material effects for marginalized people, and ultimately lead to social change. But, my academic and activist identities are in tension with each other. The academy tells me to focus my attention on developing an "academic identity." My heart wants me to take action, with my body to make some change, and not just write about it. I enjoy my place in the academy but I also have strong accountabilities to the groups I represent in my work, and count myself a part of.

As I have become more active in presenting at conferences, and on my recent quest to find a tenure track job, I have been reminded of the ways in which critical research within the academy is still, at best, marginalized and, at worst, looked upon with suspicion and ire.

But, as Conquergood (1995) reminds me: "The choice is no longer between pure and applied research. Instead, we must choose between research that is 'engaged' or 'complicit'" (p. 85).

Intersectional Reflexivity: Coalitional Activism

My queer identity and my queer politics permeate all of my identities, as does being an activist and an ally. We must reflexively engage in a rigorous understanding of intersectionality if we want to begin to explore the complexity

of our identities and create possibilities for coalitional activism and social change. By engaging in intersectional reflexivity, I learn that my marginalized queer identity does not exist separately from my privileged White male identities. I also learn that creating possibilities for alliance means prioritizing broad-based social issues that contribute to the oppression of many groups, rather than cherry-picking issues that only affect me. Rowe's (2005) conceptualization of the "politics of relation" calls on us to move from individual to coalitional notions of the self, which are "radically inclined toward others, toward the communities to which we belong, with whom we long to be, and to whom we feel accountable" (pp. 16-18). This means critically minded people, both scholars and citizens, must move beyond an individualized location, expanding our accountability from self, to others and self.

My queer political agenda is not just about calling out and critiquing heteronormativity. My queer political and social accountabilities also involve fighting racism and sexism; fighting for a more just economic system; protesting development and promoting environmental sustainability; and standing in solidarity with those in the disability rights movement, who resist the medical model of disability and mental illness that rationalizes and legitimates them being treated as less than human, incarcerated, and/or forcefully medicated against their will.

At the theoretical and conceptual level, this type of coalitional activism, and blurring of boundaries between academic and personal, is not new. This blurring and bleeding is something that feminists, especially feminists of color, and queer scholars, especially queer scholars of color, have long known and written about (Alcoff, 1991-1992; Alexander, 2006; Anzaldúa, 1999; Collins, 2000; Johnson, 2006). However, as Hendrix (2005) notes, White scholars have not been as critically and reflexively present in the discussion of identity politics and power, perhaps because White scholars are not often "in surroundings that place them in the role of 'minority' or in circumstances that required exploring their Whiteness when conducting research with White participants" (p. 330). Perhaps "our" Whiteness blinds "us." Perhaps, our layers of privilege insulate us, and protect us from the more pressing and immediate material needs that come with triple, or more, layers of marginalization. Those immediate needs are what often drive people toward activist work, because writing, reading, and theorizing take a back seat to threats of physical violence, hungry kids, or the negative health effects of environmental racism.

Critical scholars of color have been yelling at us to wake up and see things in a more complicated way, while many of us have continued on, lulled, or perhaps sedated, by a sense of critical superiority. After all, are we not the most critical and progressive in our social circles? Do we not deserve a pat on the back for being so critical and progressive? No! There's a lot more work to be done. Many people do not have the privilege of rest, reward, or reassurance.

Many people are sick and tired of being sick and tired, yet they continue. So, I cannot, as a critical scholar, thinker, and activist, be sick and tired of occasionally stepping out of my privileged identities to get my "hands dirty" because I can always retreat to the safety of my privilege when I want to, or "when the shit hits the fan."

I am learning from the work others have done, others who have different racial, ethnic, national, and ability identities than I do - work that I was not exposed to during the first 17

years of my education. And I am cautious and reflexive about picking up and joining their conversation, and not dismissing the academic labor of people of color and scholars marked as "other" as exaggerated, lacking rigor, or atheroetical, which are all critiques that, mostly White, "experts" in Academia have used to marginalize critical, embodied scholarship (Calafell & Moreman, 2009; Collins, 2000, p. 253; Hendrix, 2005). Calafell and Moreman (2009) offer provocative critiques of the academic publication process and highlight the potential and problematics inherent within critical scholarship that engages the personal voice, especially in relation to the tendency for Whiteness to remain unmarked and uncritiqued as it operates behind a façade of "objectivity" (pp. 126-129).

Forging alliances and building bridges across landscapes of marginality and liminality is risky, as is critical and embodied research aimed at social justice. Conquergood (1991) reminds me that bodily physical, and emotional risks may come with engaged research, and Behar (1996) says research that does not break your heart, is not worth doing. Does suffering make research better? How do we deal with the pain associated with research? In reality, we engage in these risks everyday, in what we have arbitrarily bracketed off as our "personal lives," through our interpersonal relationships, which involve risk, emotion, pain, accountability, and an ethic of care. And I struggle to resist this bracketing off, because I am the field.

Alexander (2006) encourages me to not let my performance as researcher overshadow the desire that motivates my research. I did not choose or ask for overlapping academic and personal identities. I became a scholar in order to understand my identities. As an organic intellectual, my research has always been driven by a personal and political longing to better understand my world and myself. Further, being a critically engaged academic and community member is not a choice; it is a mandate that has been passed to me by my academic and community mentors.

I am the field. And, in my story, I know there is agency to resist those who may try to make me feel powerless, deficient,

pathologized, sinful, or unworthy, because I hear Corey (1998) whispering in my ear: "Each queer has a little story, but in the spirit of postmodernism, a little difference becomes a lot of discourse" (p. 250). Part of telling my story means first being reflexive in regards to my intersecting identities, and to acknowledge the disadvantages and privileges that come with them. Not reflection, not just light going back and forth all neatly contained within the laws of physics, but light hitting surfaces and refracting in new directions. Reflexivity is the ceaseless process of reflection and refraction. Self-reflection might scratch the surface, but self-reflexivity cuts to the bone. It implicates you. Reflexivity is uncomfortable because it forces you to acknowledge that you are complicit in the perpetuation of oppression. The fact that I can go most places and be safe is a direct result of my White privilege, my male privilege, my ability privilege, and other social circumstances that I did not earn and that I have no control over. Reflexivity has got to hurt. Reflexivity is laborious. But, while it may be laborious for me to "go out of my way" to intervene in how I perform privilege, I must also recognize that it is a privilege to not have my performance always already marked as marginal.

If people read me as a White, heterosexual, upper-middle class, Christian, vanilla, secure person unsuspectingly standing before them, and I do not go out of my way to intervene in that reading, then I am complicit in the perpetuation of the status quo. I want to say to them:

"You don't see a boy who grew up as a poor child, living in a trailer on the side of a mountain in the rural Appalachian region of North Carolina. You don't see a boy who was called 'faggot' more times than he could count during most of his adolescent and teenage years. You don't see a 12-year-old boy praying to Jesus during the alter call at his church, 'Please make me not be gay. Please Jesus, come into my heart and make me not be gay!' You don't see a man who later renounced Christianity after all those years of being psychically abused by his Southern Baptist upbringing. You don't see a boy who was called 'n***** lover,' and verbally and

physically assaulted by the rednecks on his bus because he associated with the Black kids, who got off the bus earlier on the route. You don't see a man who later identifies as an anti-racist, committed to recognizing and dismantling White privilege."

All Aboard the Critical Scholar Rhizomatic Underground Railroad!

I have received a "call to action" by critical scholars to reveal subjugated knowledges. Gingrich-Philbrook (2005) wakes me up at night, and, channeling Foucault (1980), tells me that differential knowledges are "incapable of unanimity," and gain their force through "the harshness with which [they are] opposed by everything surrounding [them]" (p. 311), and I am inspired by his comparison of epistemology to rhizomes. Our critical ideas can burrow and tunnel, much like ginger roots and strawberry vines, escaping open surveillance and resisting the social and academic conformity imposed on the open landscape above. However, I feel that our academically radical rhizomes rarely survive their tunneling through the pesticide-laced ground of the academy. So, this predicates my call to action, to get off the poisoned land and onto fertile ground.

I am trying to find a balance between work that stays confined within the intellectually hegemonic walls of the academy and work that makes a difference and touches people outside those walls in an accessible and meaningful way. I try to do this through intersubjective research methods that connect me with people in my communities, and through critical pedagogy that hopefully plants seeds of critical thinking within my students. These actions illuminate and contribute to rich patches of rhizomes in the community which I can touch, draw nourishment from, and reciprocate nurture. Who knows how a message we share, or a realization we help co-construct, as educators, practitioners, and citizens, may travel down those tangled vines, and how many people it may reach?

So, this is the call I bring to you: acknowledge your privilege, be self-reflexive, and jump into the messiness. Put your body in spaces where you are at risk, because doing

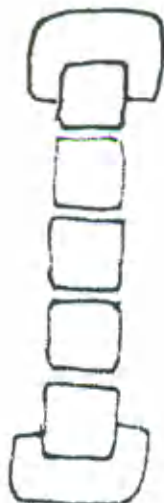
so may create a safe space for someone else. There are vast connections of rhizomes that are only sporadically visible, because most of them are underground, hidden, and subjugated. Perhaps this could be the "underground railroad" through which we, as activist-scholars, can safely transport our "radical" and critical ways of thinking to community to begin a transformation, to begin a revolution!

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DOING THE LYNCH TANGO: WHITE WOMEN, BLACK MEN, AND RACIAL PRIVILEGE

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Contentious and distrustful interactions among black men and white women are not inevitably the product of the independent actions and intentions of the persons involved. Cultural narratives, which have long ascribed savage and bestial characteristics to black men, and passive and chaste characteristics to white women, shape modern-day interactions among the two groups and influence attitudes held in the wider society. Examination of cultural narratives offers an opportunity to better understand the sociological mechanisms that support racism and racial privilege, and to recast relationships that often have been rendered toxic by a potent but usually invisible ideology.

A String of Firecrackers

Some ideas are better expressed through poetry. Writing an article about white women, black men, and the interplay of racial privilege among them is a topic so burdened with taboos, stereotypes, and historical tragedies that it is difficult to find a good place to start. More than other racial topics, this one requires a careful understanding of the shared history that white women and black men have had in the United States, and a thoughtful understanding of the ideology that has shaped that history. Otherwise, any exploration of the ways the two groups have affected each other disintegrates into the very misconceptions that scholarly writing seeks to allay. I am not a poet, but I have found that telling a story sometimes creates a good place to begin a discussion when other devices fail. So, I will start with one of my own.

I am a black man. About 15 years ago I worked as a deputy attorney general and director of New Jersey's Office of Bias Crime and Community Relations. One of my responsibilities included offering anti-racism ("diversity") training to individuals and organizations throughout the state; indeed, I not only ensured that the training was available, I also taught many of the training sessions with colleagues from my office and with trusted volunteers. Anti-racism training was a new venture for me—I'm a lawyer by profession—so during the first years of this undertaking, I was especially nervous about my teaching skills

and worried about the ways anti-racism training could go wrong. I knew that talking about race could be a profound and transformational topic, but I had also been a participant in many training sessions that went awry because they were badly taught. The problem was particularly acute for me because the courses we offered on race addressed the "tough" issues, such as racial privilege and internalized oppression, and did not shy away from talking about how participants were different because of their uncommon racial experiences, not just talking about how participants all held so much in common.

One fall weekend, I was teaching our "Basic Anti-Racism" course with a colleague. The training was a lively one, and was going well: the participants were engaging, and the group was willing to share their experiences with one another. Among the approximately 20 participants was Mary (not her real name), a white woman in her forties, who was an accomplished educator. During one of the discussions, Mary began to interrupt another participant, a common occurrence when people get excited about a topic. Mary was seated directly across from me (everyone was seated in a large circle), about 15 feet away, so I said, "Hold on a second, let's let Anne finish," and simultaneously held up my hand in a "stop" gesture. Mary did not stop, but went on to finish her thought in another few sentences. The group's discussion then continued unremarkably.

A few minutes later, we took a scheduled afternoon break for fifteen minutes. During those breaks, participants usually relax, use the restrooms, and get refreshments. I went outside the building to get some fresh air and after a few minutes walked back toward our training room. As I emerged from an elevator and walked into the hallway, I saw that some of the participants were crowded around one of the hallway benches and were apparently consoling someone who was crying. As I neared the group, I could see that it was Mary who was in distress. I asked her what was wrong. She looked at me without answering and just shook her head. "Can anyone tell me what's going on?" I asked the group. No one would answer, but just looked at me with a sense of apprehension.

I told Mary I was concerned and wanted to help, and I asked her again to tell me what was happening. "I just don't know whether I can go on," she said. "When you put your hand up and said 'stop,' it made me feel—like really threatened and unsafe." She then melted into the bench and continued to cry for about 10 minutes until my fellow trainer was able to convince her that it was worthwhile to continue. She stayed for the remainder of the training that day and the next, but appeared visibly wounded and quite wary of me.

I avoided making a further issue of the incident during the training, but I was shocked by what had happened. I spent months trying to figure out what I had done wrong, and how I could have handled the situation better. I spoke with other trainers whom I trusted to get some dispassionate assessments of the situation; I questioned how my own male privilege might have been at work; and I tried to allow the incident to be an opportunity for my own learning. Ultimately, I would have construed the incident as a singular anomaly if I had not later experienced what became an ever-increasing list of similar experiences with white women.

As the years passed, wondering when and why a white woman would "have a meltdown" over something I said or did became a kind of training expectation and a source of personal worry. Even something as seemingly innocuous as my dismissing a group of participants for a

lunch break could provoke ire and a complaint that I was either unfair about time allocation or insensitive about the issues at hand. The incidents were infrequent, but persistent enough to make me despair because no matter how I tried to parse them, I could not understand why they continued. I knew that there were stereotypes about white women, stereotypes about black men, and stereotypes about white women and black men together. Yet none of those seemed to fit my experiences. Besides, white women were among the greatest supporters and attendants at the anti-racism trainings. Unlike white men (who usually did not attend), white women were more often courageous about racial issues and willing to take themselves and others to task. Indeed, they had been some of my best teachers about anti-racism efforts. Still, the string of firecrackers that was my freakish dealings with a small number of white women continued to explode.

I received some clarity in a training that happened late in 2008. I had since stopped working for the State of New Jersey and had helped establish the Beyond Diversity Resource Center to continue anti-racism training and other human relations efforts. The training director, Pamela Smith Chambers, and I were conducting a training session for members of a nonprofit organization that wanted to ensure that its staff members kept their diversity skills sharp. One of the exercises we conducted is a now classic one in which we asked participants to form a line standing shoulder-to-shoulder. I read a list of racial privileges and anti-privileges to the participants and asked them to move forward or backwards depending upon how each privilege or anti-privilege applied to them. Example: "If you have ever been followed by a security guard in a store because of your race, take one step back... If you have never been followed by a security guard in a store because of your race, take one step forward." This is a powerful exercise and one that can bring up strong emotions because of the visual impact it inspires: members of the culturally privileged group—white people—arrive at the front of the room because they have mostly taken steps forward, and members of the culturally



unprivileged group—people of color—arrive at the rear of the room because they have mostly taken steps backward.

After the participants moved themselves through the exercise, Pamela and I asked everyone to share their thoughts and feelings. There was nothing unusual in this debrief compared to the many others we had done in the past: emotions were high, and some individuals felt a startling sense of new learning. After about 30 minutes we were about to conclude the discussion, when one participant, Sue (not her real name), a white woman in her thirties, signaled that she would like to make a comment. I called her name and asked her to go ahead.

"I feel like I've been violated," she said as she looked at me with a grimace. "And you don't have any right to make me feel like this." She broke her gaze from me and then glanced around the room. "It (the exercise) makes me think of how dangerous things might get. You know now that Obama has been elected, and there have been some blacks I've heard on the news that will want to get white people for what happened before. I don't want to think about that. I just feel really violated and abused."

I kept my facilitator game face on after Sue's comment and closed the exercise by thanking her for sharing her thoughts. Her comments, however, made me want to both laugh out loud and to recoil in horror. The amusing part was my conjuring a scene of angry black people, having now brought to fruition their sinister plot to elect Senator Obama as president, attacking white people at random. I wondered, "Would my 79-year-old mother start making Molotov cocktails in her kitchen?" She really preferred to order out or go to a restaurant, so the likelihood seems small. The horrible part was that Sue's use of the words "violated" and "abused" made me think of the words victims of domestic violence and sexual assault use to describe their experiences. Although I had engaged in no violence, Sue's words used that language to describe how she felt I had treated her. I decided to try to research the larger societal connections involved in her statements in the hope that it would also illuminate the other

negative experiences I had with some white women during training sessions. I undertook this quest mindful that my negative experiences were repetitive but infrequent, and therefore I would be searching for the cause or causes of a particular dynamic—but certainly not the only dynamic—that happens between white women and black men.

History Written in Lightning/Leopard's Spots

What was happening in my interactions felt like it came from somewhere else, not simply from the sometimes contentious relationship individuals have with their hosting diversity trainers. I wondered whether racial privilege was at work in sparking those experiences. The question was a tricky one because the white women and I represented groups that both hold and do not hold cultural privileges as part of primary identification; that is, I hold male privilege, but not white privilege; they hold white privilege, but not male privilege. Reasoning how these nested sets of privileges might have played out among us could yield two primary outcomes: Male privilege would make me act bossy, demanding, and entitled. White privilege would cause the women to avoid addressing issues of race and racism by claiming an illusory injustice at my hands. I would be harmed by the racism inherent in the actions of the white women; they would be harmed by the sexism inherent in my actions. Which part of the privilege dyad was actually at work—or more at work—in the situations would, of course, be subject to debate. However that debate might be settled (if it could be settled) seemed to leave a shallow, unsatisfactory outcome that did not explain how I found myself situated among a few white women who in my mind were unfairly crying "foul."

As I thought about my "white women interactions," I was reminded of the feelings that came to mind when I watched a scene from *Birth of a Nation*, a pre-modern film about the South after the Civil War (Griffith, 1915). To show the social disruptions of that era, the film has a scene in which Flora, a white woman from the South, goes to get water from a spring. When Flora pauses, she

is spied by Gus, an emancipated slave (who is played by a white actor in blackface). Gus watches Flora with a sinister look and then comes from his hiding place in the brush to announce that he is a captain in the military and wants to marry her. He takes her hand but she slaps him and runs away through the forest with Gus in pursuit. Although Gus says that he will not hurt her, Flora climbs to a cliff and threatens to jump if Gus does not stay away. When Gus continues his approach, Flora falls from the cliff and dies. It is unclear whether Flora slips or throws herself from her perch, but the film suggests that such distinctions are unnecessary. The intertitle over Flora advises: "For her who had learned the stern lesson of honor, we should not grieve that she found sweeter the opal gates of death."

Flora lives long enough, however, to tell her brother about her pursuer, and consequently Gus is later captured, tried by the Klan, lynched, and castrated. President Woodrow Wilson described the film as "history written in lightning," a history, he added, that was "regret(ably)...all true" (Schickel, 1984, pp. 268-270).

Birth of a Nation was based on the book, *The Clansman*, by Thomas Dixon (1905), who well captures a popular depiction of white women and their relationship to black men after reconstruction. In another one of his books, *Leopard's Spots*, Dixon recounts the return of a Confederate veteran, Tom Camp, to witness the wedding of his daughter Annie, to Hose Norman, "a gallant poor white from the high hill country." According to the story, immediately after the Reverend John Durham completes the marriage ceremony, "a black shadow (falls) across the doorway," and a drunken "burly figure of a big Negro trooper" and six others burst into the room. After frightening the guests and causing a scuffle, the troopers carry Annie into the woods in preparation for rape. As part of the rescue plans, Tom asks his allies not to spare Annie's life in the effort to thwart the rape: "Shoot, men! My God, Shoot! There are things worse than death!" Tom later thanks his friends for killing Annie during the melee because they

had saved his daughter from "them brutes" (Dixon, 1908, pp. 123-127).

The modern reader should know that writers like Dixon did not consider the story recounted above, although fictional, an exaggeration of the truth. The Historical Note to *Leopard's Spots* makes the point directly:

"I wish to say that all the incidents used...were selected from authentic records, or came within my personal knowledge...The only serious liberty I have taken with history is to tone down the facts to make them credible in fiction....It will be a century yet before people outside the South can be made to believe a literal statement of the history of those times....I tried to write this book with the utmost restraint" (Dixon, 1908, p. x).

Presumably, others believed the story too, and answered the book's title-page question, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" (Dixon, 1908, p. vii) with a firm "No!"

As I looked at these sources and the greater historical record, I had to ask myself if my "white woman experiences" were their progeny, and if so what part privilege had played in my experiences. I also wondered how it would be possible for that racial history, now about a century old, to play itself out in the 21st century among people so modern, reflective, and aware of stereotypes.

Post-Civil War lynching that grew out of the ideation of black men as raping brutes is well known. Because of Southern worries about the political enfranchisement of blacks, lynching was seen as a justifiable weapon to preserve old racial hierarchies. A mythical history emerged in which what was wrong with the South could be exemplified in the need to defend white women against raping black men (Royster, 1997). This myth had fatal consequences. In 1893 alone, 52 black men were lynched just for claims, allegations, attempts, or suspicions of rape (Wells, 1895).

Most of the alleged crimes were unfounded, and therefore the lynchings were acts of violence used to consolidate racial power with the protection of white women used as a deception (Wells, 1900). Moreover, whole communities were purged of all black residents because of such claims (Jaspin, 2007).

White women have racial privilege, but that privilege seemed an ill-suited explanation of what seemed to be similar experiences between myself and white women, and the black men and white women I learned about as I studied lynching in the United States. A claim of wrong (often sexual) from a white damsel in distress, the uncontested societal need to redress the offense, and a lynching were the threads that seemed to be relevant to my own experiences. If the analogy were true, privilege offered only glancing insight into how the actions and patterns of thought could carry themselves forward. One of the consequences of holding privilege, for example, is the tendency for the person holding privilege to "define the issue at hand," including the determination of whether a particular action is moral, immoral, bigoted, or fair-minded, or the determination of whether persons under scrutiny are worthy, respected, savages, or contemptible (Parker & Chambers, 2007). Although this effect of privilege helps explain why the individual women I encountered might well understand the consequences of their complaints about me, privilege did not explain why the ideology that formed the complaints was so powerful and persistent.

A Lynch Tango

I have found a theory of ideology set forth by J.M. Balkin, however, that offers the explanations I was seeking, and that provides a central addition to anti-racist thinking about privilege. Balkin (1998) describes ideology as the "socially generated and socially sustained ways in which human beings understand and constitute their world" (p. 2), a kind of "cultural software" that resides in each individual, is passed down and "rewritten" among individuals through their interactions, and that enables individuals to make judgments about the social world. Cultural software is powerful because it is ubiquitous; people are necessarily

immersed in it, and in normal circumstances it drops into the background by shaping experience but remaining unnoticed (Balkin, 1998). For example, when individuals go to a restaurant, there are many associations, customs, and hierarchies that they must understand: how to address the server, what service should be expected, how much time should customarily elapse for the food to arrive, how loudly to speak in the restaurant, and whether to leave a tip are all part of cultural modes of behavior and expectation that members of the society pass on to others. Yet, these customs are so common that they seem invisible. The advantage of this invisible software is that individuals can anticipate much about the world around them and move through their day efficiently; it would be difficult to eat at a restaurant if the rules of engagement constantly changed. The disadvantage of this invisible software is that some of these expectations perpetuate and preserve entrenched bigotry and injustice (Balkin, 1998).

I became especially interested in Balkin's discussion of cultural narratives as a potent means of transmitting a society's ideology because the themes embedded in *Birth of a Nation* and *Leopard's Spots* fit into a narrative structure. Narrative thought is the organization of the world into a sequence of events—a plot—with cultural expectations. Narratives frame our understanding of what is happening around us by using a stock story to ascribe particular purposes and intentions to individuals (Balkin, 1998). What I have now termed a "lynch narrative" was similar to my own experiences and the wider historical account. In this stock story, African American men are sexual monsters who pursue white women. Those men must be subjugated to preserve the social order, and white men are the primary rescuers (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1998; Gunning, 1996). Embedded in the narrative are not only old stereotypes about African Americans and the ability to keep them terrorized and intimidated, but also deeply held expectations about white women, who are constructed as being pure, pious, and modest, and whose bodies become objectified as metaphors for the purity of the entire nation

(Gunning, 1996; Royster, 1997). In turn, the lynch narrative is supported by other narratives such as the "frontier myth" and the "savage war" in which white Americans put themselves in the wilderness and civilize it through expansion and the subjugation of uncivilized, indigenous people (Slotkin, 1998). The "rape narrative" is another complimentary companion. In it, women are shattered through sexual violence and, as a consequence, lose their reason and voice (Cutter, 2001).

As these narratives operate in my own interactions with white women, the narratives play themselves out with a more modern spin. In this stock story I am the brute harassing white women about race, taking them to task, and putting them in distress. White women play a wounded, mostly distraught role, and are left to call upon the surrounding community for assistance and retribution. Substituting for an overt sexual threat is the challenge and potential upset that anti-racism brings to our society. Then finally comes a plea for help that is assumed to be unquestionably well-grounded and sufficient to incite others to make me stop.

Because narratives are part of a larger ideology, it is no surprise that the lynch narrative would be persistent and invisible. As Balkin (1998) states, "Because individuals are constituted by their cultural software, they are continually immersed in forms of hermeneutic power without noticing it." (p. 271). This gives us the opportunity to better explain why racial privilege—part of our society's ideology—is so often unnoticed. Furthermore, the ideas of cultural software and its constituents, like cultural narratives, give us an additional opportunity to understand the interlocking sociological mechanisms that keep racial privilege and racism in place. I firmly believe that the work of addressing racism is difficult precisely because it is so firmly entrenched in our society and so absorbed by its members that they fail to see it except in its most blatant forms. Although discussion about racial privilege is one way to help individuals understand racism, the concepts of ideology, cultural software, and cultural software's constituent parts offer other useful tools for learning.

The discussion of ideology can be particularly rich. I wonder, for example, to what extent the lynch narrative makes itself true in the interaction among black men and white women because of the narrative's ability to subtly shape human action (Balkin 1998). Does the lynch narrative cause black men to become modern-day provocateurs against white women? Does it cause white women to act like damsels in distress? Additionally, the question of responsibility looms large as we look at ideology. In the lynch narrative, women are coined as passive and retreating. Does the narrative shift societal scrutiny away from the moral responsibility that lies with those who are complicit with retribution but do not carry out the retribution themselves (cf. Haslam & Reicher, 2008)?

Finally, I wonder whether we can have discussions about these and other questions while keeping the rape narrative—a buttress to the lynch narrative—and actual rape distinct (Anderson, 2005). The rape narrative is a stock story that helps perpetuate our racial ideology. Sexual assault is a violent crime that happens to more than 17% of women in the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). Although the two share elements in common, the importance of ideology and the harmfulness of sexual assault may be minimized if the two are conflated.

By examining the components of our racial ideology in this and other contexts, we have the opportunity to better grasp their consequences, evaluate their adequacy, and ultimately replace old patterns of thinking with others that we believe will be more suitable. I have found relief in understanding one of the important bases of my previously puzzling interactions with white women, even if that understanding does not promise that the lynch narrative will not play itself out in the future. I think that this racial ideology has held black men and white women in a kind of dance: a lynch tango. With investigation and commitment we can stop the dance, or at least understand why we continue to step on our partners' toes.

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UNLEARNING PRIVILEGE AND BECOMING AN ALLY: IT IS NEVER TOO YOUNG TO START

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This article presents the Matrix model for understanding oppression and privilege which can inform teaching, theorizing, and practice. This framework draws upon the notion of a "matrix of domination," approaching privilege from an intersectional perspective. The author then explores her personal experience as a parent and teacher to explore the dynamics of privilege, what it means to be an ally, and the myriad ways in which we can subvert privilege on a daily basis. Finally, the concept of allyship is explored from an intersectional perspective and specific examples are considered.



As an academic scholar, my research has examined the complex dynamics of privilege, particularly among overt white supremacists. However, as scholars we rarely get the opportunity to write about our own personal reflections, and the more I understand about how privilege operates, the more evident it becomes how it shapes my own life on a daily basis. I would like to see more opportunities for us to explore the intersections of the personal and the academic in our work. After all, we do this work in order to create social change. Those of us studying privilege do so because we are committed to social justice, to the project of dismantling privilege. But to do so requires that we explore our own lives as well. Everyday we struggle with how to make real our commitment, for ourselves and for our students. As teachers, we need to be able to answer our students' questions when they ask us what they can do. It is our job not only to help students see privilege in their lives, but to provide them with tools for dismantling privilege. It is in this vein that I would like to examine a number of very personal examples from my own life.

Synthesizing the accumulated insights and research of many scholars and activists, I have sought to bring them together into a model for understanding oppression and privilege from an intersectional perspective. This framework is informed by a sociological perspective, and draws upon the notion of a "matrix of domination" (Collins, 1990). Key features of this framework are outlined below

The Matrix Framework

1. *Recognize the importance of examining both privilege and oppression:* Privilege and oppression are two sides of the same coin; you cannot have one without the other.

2. *Intersectional:* Emphasizes that forms of privilege and oppression interact and intersect, so it makes visible diversity within groups. For example, no one has just a racial identity. This approach emphasizes that rather than seeing African Americans as a homogenous group, the experiences of African Americans vary depending upon other important social classifications such as gender, class, and sexual orientation.

3. *Social constructionist:* Categories of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, etc. are social classifications, and are historically and culturally variable. These classifications are largely the result of inequality, created and perpetuated to support specific configurations of power. This framework focuses on inequality instead of differences.

4. *Inclusive:* Virtually everyone experiences privilege (whether race, gender, ethnic, sexual orientation, class, ability); thus

it is one experience we all share. We all have a racial identity, a gender identity etc. In some ways we may be marginalized, but in others we are privileged.

5. *Inequality is institutional*: This approach does not blame individuals. Privilege and oppression are not seen as characteristics of people, but of society. According to Johnson (2001), "*Oppression and dominance* name social realities that we can participate in without being oppressive or dominating people" (p. 13). This framework focuses on outcomes and impact, which may result independent of one's intention. We receive privileges whether we want to or not. We may not be consciously heterosexist; however, heterosexuals receive privileges in our society that LGBTQ people do not.

6. *Recognizes inequality as harmful to all*: Emphasizes that narrow group identities can be harmful to everyone, even those who are privileged.

7. *Encourages ongoing self-examination*: Because we are all implicated in the dynamics of privilege and oppression, we all need to do the difficult personal and emotional work required of us.

8. *Proactive focus on social change*: We are all a part of the problem and need to be part of the solution. We all must take ownership of these issues and we should all be involved in trying to create change.

One of the truly liberatory possibilities of focusing on privilege, rather than only oppression, is that privilege is something we all experience. When we examine privilege through an intersectional prism, taking into consideration the dynamics of race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, age, and nation, we can all find some way to examine privilege in our own lives, and find some foundation to join together as allies to work for social justice.

This framework has directed my attention to my own experiences of race, class, and heterosexual privilege, and challenged me to examine my own role in reproducing privilege. When I walk into a store, no one follows me around to make sure I don't shoplift. I have never been pulled over by the police because of my race, and unlike my

African American and Latina friends, I have been stopped by the police on more than one occasion for speeding and let go with just a "warning." Most important, I have realized the extent to which I can ignore race. I have the luxury of ignoring race in my daily life. I do not have to worry about my child being called names in school, harassed, beat up, arrested, denied a job, denied a raise, or charged more for a car because of race. I can count on race working in her favor.

I not only benefit from my white privilege, but also from my heterosexual privilege. I can walk hand in hand with my husband in public and display his photo on my desk without fear. We can assume without question that we can benefit from each other's health and life insurance. We do not fear for our child being teased at school for having two parents of the same sex/gender. We know that she sees families like hers everyday in books, on television, in movies, generally portrayed in a positive light, and do not worry about her being exposed to stereotypes about our sexuality or race. Everywhere we go, we are always represented as the norm.

Thank You, David Duke

I am a member of the organizing team of the White Privilege Conference (WPC), an annual conference committed to examining white supremacy, privilege, and oppression. I would like to share one experience that occurred last spring at the 10th annual conference.

Working with the WPC makes clear how the potential loss of privilege is truly threatening to many people, and gets in the way of people stepping up as allies. This year, in addition to the expected hate letters, white supremacist David Duke featured the WPC on his website, including my photo, and that of other conference planning team members. This created an atmosphere of fear and anxiety for many at the conference. We know that these kinds of articles can precipitate hate crimes and are simply one manifestation of the feelings that many people harbor when it comes to race. This was an occasion for me to examine my own privilege in a number of ways.

First, for a very brief moment at the conference, I experienced *not* having racial privilege. I remember very clearly the moment when one participant casually observed, "It is interesting that no white people were targeted in [David Duke's] article." Hearing that immediately stunned me. *I am* a white person. Here I was in the midst of a four-day experience examining in detail my whiteness and the privileges I reap from it every day. And yet, this comment highlighted that for many people, including the readers of David Duke's website, I am not white because I am Jewish. For a very brief time, I felt what it was like to not have white privilege in every aspect of my life. At the same time, losing that privilege made me starkly aware of it, and how much I benefit from it most of the time. I have the luxury of feeling safe *most* of the days and moments of my life, and in most contexts.

This was driven home even further by the immediate outpouring of support from conference participants. As more and more people at the conference learned about the Duke article, it prompted many attendees to confront their own privilege. One presenter, Jessica Pettit, sent me these thoughts (included here with her permission):

*What is my white privilege -
not being used to this,
not having my picture in the article,
not having my name in the article,
being scared by this to some/any
degree
I wonder even if you may be used to
this-
Do you really just get used to being
threatened? scared?
Not knowing this is my white
privilege.*

I was truly touched when another participant told me, "We have your back." But even more so, I felt ambivalence. As someone who is tremendously privileged by my whiteness *most* of the time, I don't typically need anyone looking out for me. My thoughts turned, immediately, to all of the people of color and LGBT folks targeted in white supremacist publications, day in and day out, who can not

pass for white, or heterosexual, or gender conforming...*who has their backs?* When Angie Zapata, a young transgender Colorado woman, was brutally murdered last year why didn't anyone have her back? I felt ambivalence, and, honestly, anger. Anger that I was the recipient of so much support, and feeling what an impact this can have, yet knowing that so many others who need this support do not receive it. It was only a very fleeting moment of fear for me; for others it lasts a lifetime. I also recognize I was the beneficiary of this support because of my class privilege, which allowed me to be there in the first place, and my white privilege, which gives me the option of doing this work at much less personal cost than people of color who do this work.

Being an Ally

Many authors have written about the importance of being an ally. Anyone who experiences privilege has the potential to be an ally to those who are oppressed. We know that systems of oppression and privilege are interacting, mutually constitutive, and reinforcing. Therefore, we cannot oppose only one system of inequality and meet with any success. We must work to undermine all forms of inequality simultaneously. Starting with the matrix framework as a foundation, I offer the following guidelines, many of which have been adapted from others, including Wijeyesinghe, Griffin, and Love (1997); Gorski (2009); and Kivel (2009):

- Take responsibility for learning about how oppression and privilege works, and teach others. Do not expect others to teach you.
- Assume that inequality and oppression are everywhere, all the time, even when not visible to you.
- Work continuously to be aware of your own privilege, and the way privilege operates. Notice who is the center of attention and who has access to power.
- Notice the ways in which oppression and privilege are denied, ignored, minimized, or justified.
- Learn from history from both the history of specific forms of inequality as well as from

social movements that have worked for change and social justice.

- Understand the connections between the various forms of oppression and privilege and pay attention to how they intersect and support each other.

- Speak out! Take a stand against injustice. Take risks and be willing to act in spite of your own fear and the resistance you face from others.

- Recognize that learning to see oppression and privilege is an ongoing, lifelong process.

- Recognize that you will make mistakes and approach them as learning opportunities. Be willing to be confronted about your own behavior and attitudes. It is okay to be uncomfortable. It is a sign that you are learning!

- Pick your battles, taking action against social injustice in your own sphere of influence.

- Pay attention to mundane, daily interactions, and media messages. Privilege is normalized in very subtle ways and is so pervasive that we often do not recognize it.

- Listen to, respect, and support the leadership, perspectives, and experiences of members of oppressed groups.

- Protect yourself from burnout, and find support among other individuals, groups, and organizations. Take advantage of opportunities to reenergize and recommit yourself to this difficult work (for example, attend the WPC). Strive to cultivate a community of allies.

I think it is particularly important to emphasize that privilege is manifested all the time. Working to dismantle privilege is not just a question of confronting major cases of injustice, or embracing specific social movements or organizations. No matter what we do in our life, no matter where we are, we encounter experiences of privilege and oppression being normalized and institutionalized on a daily basis. Every one of these experiences presents an occasion for educating ourselves and others, and working for change. I see my privilege everyday, and one of the biggest challenges for me is how to make this visible for my daughter. In doing inclusion work with teachers, one of the concerns I often hear is that kids can't really

deal with these issues until they reach a certain age. Many teachers are convinced that we cannot examine privilege with young children. I disagree. Because privilege is such an omnipresent issue in our lives, we are provided with daily occasions for examining it with children. The earlier we start, the better. Every occasion of the normalization of privilege is also an occasion for its interrogation. Let me share a few examples.

Barbie Gets Married

I remember when my daughter was a preschooler and we were sitting in a doctor's office waiting room, and she picked up a book for me to read to her. It was a book about Barbie getting married. As we were reading the book, we came to a page with pictures of Barbie in her wedding dress, standing next to Skipper, her bridesmaid. When my daughter saw the picture she exclaimed, with joy "Look! Barbie's marrying Skipper!" I remember being shocked and thinking quickly about how to respond. My very first thought was how wonderful it is that she sees this as possible: that she can imagine and be excited about two women getting married! My next thought was, I don't want to crush her enthusiasm. So I went along with it, and responded, "Yes, how exciting!" Because she could not yet read, I was able to change the story, and when Ken entered the picture, I simply pretended that he was a member of the wedding party.

The Game of Life

My daughter used to like playing *Life*, the game with little plastic people who move around the board in little plastic cars. The little plastic people come in two colors; you guessed it—pink or blue! As you move through "Life," at some point you land on a space that commands you to get married. First, notice how the institution of heterosexual marriage is normalized here. The players do not get to decide whether or not to marry, and later, whether or not to have kids. The fact of marriage and parenthood is normalized as a natural part of life everyone will engage in. When we played the game, I pointed this out, and we talked about some of the adults we know who are not married, or who do not have

children, yet have full, successful, happy lives. Next, I made the decision to select a marriage partner of the same color. I used this as an opportunity to casually point out that in most states two people of the same gender are not allowed to get married, but that I think this is wrong, people should be allowed to marry whomever they love. As she got a bit older, I could take the discussion a bit deeper. What was most gratifying was to see her begin pondering whether to marry a pink or blue character, and to vary it in future games.

Opportunities arise all the time to discuss these issues with children. The fact is that they are getting messages about privilege all the time, from television, movies, storybooks, etc., and we need to be able to respond as when they arise. I do not think we need to sit down and have a formal discussion about sexual orientation with preschoolers, but when they are exposed to messages that normalize heterosexual privilege, we should be ready to respond and teach our children to question that normalization. It should become a normal and conscious part of our role as parents, teachers, and responsible adults.

Saving Sex for Marriage

A final example I want to share happened very recently. I attended a meeting for parents at my daughter's middle school to meet with two ob/gyns who were volunteering their time to conduct human development discussions with the students. The discussions would encompass basic body changes and reproductive functioning, birth control, relationships, including lesbian and gay relationships (hurray!!! I thought), various STIs and protection, etc. I was relieved that my daughter was attending a school where these issues would be openly discussed. During the Q and A period, some questions arose regarding protection and abstinence. In response, one of the speakers said that she wanted to be clear that she has her own values around this subject matter, and that given all of the pregnant teens and teens with STIs that she sees, her advice to teens is that they should "wait until marriage." She acknowledged that this may not be realistic, and believes that kids need to know how to protect themselves if

they engage in sexual activity but that she also wants to make clear that she believes the best choice is to "wait until marriage."

Well, this immediately set off alarms for me. I know that in my daughter's class alone there are a number of kids with single parents, and some with parents in committed gay and lesbian relationships. I raised my hand and pointed this out. "What I meant," she responded, "is that they should wait until they are adults, and can make informed choices, and are ready to handle the adult responsibilities that accompany sexual activity." But it was interesting how easily that translated into and was symbolized by marriage. We equate marriage with adulthood, responsibility, and commitment. Saying "wait until you're married" became shorthand for "wait until you are a responsible adult and really ready." We know there are many abstinence only educators who argue vehemently that heterosexual marriage is the only acceptable time to engage in sexual activity. But that was not what she meant. And, that was not what the school wanted to convey. The fact that they were willing to teach about birth control and lesbian and gay identities/relationships signals this. So in this incident what is disturbing to me is how even among liberals with the best intentions, heterosexual privilege is so easily normalized. What kind of subtle message does it send to kids when they hear, from a doctor, that it is best to reserve sexual activity for marriage? In that moment, how does it make those children feel who have two parents who cannot legally marry? Despite the best of intentions, we need to be ever vigilant about the ways in which heterosexual privilege is normalized unconsciously everyday, all the time.

Conclusion

I incorporate these kinds of stories and examples into my teaching as often as possible. All of the courses I teach focus on issues of race, gender, and sexuality, and it is often the first time students have really thought about how privilege affects their lives on a daily basis. Sharing these personal stories can be powerful and through them I emphasize that unlearning oppression and privilege is a life-long process.

I am able to model the ways that I continually recognize new instances of privilege that I had not recognized before. Sharing examples of times when I have felt successful, as well as the times I have felt displeased with my response, is essential, demonstrating that we must all be open to making mistakes and learning from them. At the same time, sharing these instances with students also highlights why it is so important to find networks of support. As a class, we can share ideas and strategies for how I might have responded differently. I also use this as an opportunity to ask students where they will find support once they leave this class, or college, all together

These examples also highlight some of the key ways in which we can work to be allies, everyday, all the time, no matter where we are. I find that students often narrowly envision activism and being an ally as a formal role one takes on, for example, by joining a social movement or anti-racist organization. Using these examples from my daily life allows students to envision how they might incorporate being an ally into everything they do, no matter what career they embark upon. We need to work on seeing our privilege in our daily mundane activities. Allies are needed everywhere—in doctors offices, at schools, at restaurants, in stores—because privilege manifests everywhere. Privilege is often normalized in very subtle ways. It is our choice whether we continue to uncritically normalize privilege or commit to challenging it when and where we can, and it is never too soon to start.

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CONFESSIONS OF A CHRISTIAN SUPREMACIST

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In this narrative, the author describes her journey as a progressive, white, U.S. Christian in comprehending the deeply embedded nature of her position of Christian superiority, which she names Christian supremacy. She indicates the obstacles and opportunities in dismantling Christian privilege for Christians and those who work with them in social justice-social action circles. The author questions how certain Christian beliefs and attitudes may prevent or promote anti-oppressive practice. The unique complexities, promises, and resources for grappling with the intersections of marginalized and privileged identities within Christian privilege work are highlighted.

A year ago I enrolled in a social work class called Disrupting Privilege through Anti-Oppressive Practice (for information on the pedagogy and structure of the course, see Walls, Roll, Griffin, & Sprague, in press; Walls et al., 2009). In the class, students were placed in groups associated with a specific kind of systemic privilege that they personally embodied. There was a white privilege caucus and an able-bodied privilege caucus. Though I shared both of those privileged identities, I was placed in the Christian privilege caucus in order to delve into the ways that my Christian identity had benefited me and oppressed others.

Despite my years of anti-oppression work, the language of Christian privilege was completely new to me. I had breathed the air of Christian privilege my whole life. I was a WASP pastor's kid from New England, a former foreign missionary, an ordained local church pastor, and currently a doctoral student in Christian social ethics. I was a serious theological and political progressive, a Christian living on the margins of my own religious tradition. I was a feminist, an activist in my denomination for the full inclusion GLBTQ (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer) Christians, experienced in interfaith work, and involved in the community for racial and indigenous justice. I was aware of the ravages of Christian domination and violence against marginalized groups throughout the ages. I had no compunction to speak about such matters openly. That it had never crossed my mind, not even once, that my identity as a Christian in this country was a privileged social location

was an obvious signal that it was. I did not find it too difficult to accept that the "knapsack" of Christian privileges with which I was associated were, indeed, real: the prevalence and positive portrayal of my Christian tradition and values dominating law, media, culture, and history; the comfort and security of being, speaking, and practicing my Christian faith without threat of violence; and the concrete ways I continue to benefit when atheists and other non-Christian traditions are excluded and marginalized. While I was stunned once again by recognizing this new layer of privilege, my consciousness was raised.

Throughout the first few weeks of the class, I consoled myself with the notion that because of my progressiveness, at the very least I was "better" than most other Christians. I wanted to clarify that I was *definitely* not like my fellow United Methodists George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. I distanced myself not only from the extremely intolerant, warring-type of Christian, but was also quick to see myself as different from the other student members of my Christian privilege caucus, who mostly defined themselves as evangelical.

Certain in-class experiences fostered my transformation. In a theatre of the privileged exercise, I embodied my position of distance from "other Christians." Literally separating myself from my own caucus members during the exercise helped me see that this cognitive behavior was a form of resistance to doing my own work and fully acknowledging the extent of my privilege. While I was distancing from the evangelicals in the caucus, there was

some parallel version of this resistant distancing that all of the members of the Christian privilege caucus were actually doing – each of us Christians distancing ourselves from other Christians whom we considered to be somewhere on the spectrum of religiously unenlightened to violently extreme. In fact, my behavior was hardly different. I was also a Christian who considered myself to be a better Christian and better person with better beliefs than others. Disassociating myself prevented me from dealing with a central issue: my own sense of righteousness, how I positioned myself in relation to people of other faiths or no religious faith, and the power wielded by my privileged group over others.

In another experiential exercise, the caucus members participated in a fish-bowl exercise, sitting in the middle of the room while other class members read statements from persons who experienced marginalization and oppression as a result of Christians' attitudes and behaviors. Some members of my caucus cried as we began to bear witness to the anger and pain that our Christian privilege caused among those who were marginalized by our Christian supremacy. I was aware at first that I did not feel more than an intellectual assent to what was being spoken, until one person read a statement: "I hate it when Christians think that I would be happier if I only believed what they believe." I felt my body take a defensive position. Somehow I felt accused, but of what? I had to ask myself, did I think people would be happier if they believed what I believed? I didn't want to believe that I believed that. It sounded so arrogant and, yes, privileged. I lived with this question for weeks until I could admit that yes, in fact, I did believe people would be happier if they *at least* believed in God. As I excavated (Kendall, 2006) my beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors, I had to acknowledge that in the past I had expressed feeling bad for those who didn't believe. Though perhaps more consciously tolerant and less conspicuously imposing, I had to confront the notion that I really accepted as true that my way of believing was superior to others. I had to reckon that I held a deep-down belief that my way was normal, better!

returned to a text we had read early in the quarter by Goodman (2001):

Superiority is not always conveyed in blatant and intentional ways. In reference to racism, bell hooks... calls this type of superiority "White supremacy." She defines it as the unconscious, internalized values and attitudes that maintain domination, even when people do not support or display overt discrimination or prejudice... This sense of superiority extends from the characteristics and culture of the dominant group to the individuals themselves. Oppression is commonly defined, in part, as the belief in the inherent superiority of one group over another. (p. 19)

I was coming to terms with the reality that it was not only Bush and Cheney, not only conservative evangelicals, but also I that operated in this world with a belief in the inherent superiority of my religion.

It was one thing to recognize that I continued to benefit from the structures of domination that I claimed to oppose. It was another to admit that I maintained those structures with this deep sense of superiority that I would have told you sincerely that I did not possess. Superiority, however well hidden, is still superiority and still imposes in its sense of truth and rightness. It is tempting at this early stage of Christian privilege work to paint "the problem" relative to Christian privilege in this country in conservative, evangelical terms. Certainly the Christian right in both its theological and political manifestations is an easy and often necessary target. But seeing only this part of the Christian community as the problem, would be to make a similar mistake as locating the problem of racism only in the white South. It does not get at the way in which an inherent religious superiority is

deeply and broadly entrenched in most all Christian people in this nation.

A year after this course ended, I was invited to be a facilitator for the next class' Christian caucus. Halfway into the quarter one of the co-facilitators pointed out that I was able to name easily some of the oppressor positions I embody and maintain: racist, sexist, heterosexist, ableist. Yet she noted that I stumbled when I tried to label the oppressor group with which I had been selected to identify for the purposes of the class. This task of naming had remained unfinished from when I was a student in the class the previous year. In the week that followed, her question stayed with me. In the middle of the week, I heard a radio commentary reporting on Christian fundamentalism in the officer corps of the U.S. military, particularly as it plays out in the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq (*Democracy Now!*, 2009). This exposé described a Christian attitude and practice of religiously motivated domination that was so destructive and horrific that it could be labeled as nothing short of supremacist. I decided to take on the word for myself: Christian supremacist.

The term seemed extreme at first. I had to remind myself that part of my early work on Christian privilege was to not allow myself to distance from the extremes of my own group, a common dynamic in privilege work that Kendall (2006) illustrates in her own struggle where she, as a progressive, anti-racist white person wanted to disown racist white friends and family members. What also made the language difficult to use was how closely it is related to white supremacy. But the previous year's class had shown me how intertwined the project of white supremacy is with Christianity. Part of the tremendous potential of this Christian privilege work is the extent to which it lends itself to work on the intersections of oppression and privilege. While white privilege work connects directly to racial and ethnic oppression, Christian privilege work relates to a whole host of categories of oppression. It not only dominates other religious and atheistic traditions in this country, but is implicated in virtually every other category of oppression: racism, sexism, heterosexism,

ableism, classism, and an anthropocentrism that contributes to the destruction of the earth. Every one of these categories has been undergirded by Christian theological justifications. So, it seems even more relevant to call the phenomenon of Christian privilege by this more accurate descriptor named Christian supremacy.

But the intersectionality of Christian privilege work brings up other complications. While Christian traditions and scriptures have served as a source of oppression for many groups, they have also served as a source of resistance and liberation (Cone, 1990; De La Torre, 2002; Goss, 1993; Schussler Fiorenza, 1995). Christianity was the foundation for the system of slavery in the United States and a justification for racism and imperialism for centuries. Yet it has also been a basis for resistance for Africans and African Americans during slavery and the civil rights movement (Morris, 1986). Yet even as the exodus narrative of the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible is a central theme for black liberation theology it has also been used to justify the conquest and devastation of indigenous communities (Tinker, 2004).

Not only can Christian ideology be mobilized for both oppression and liberation, but there is also within group stratification that gets played out. White, evangelical Protestantism (both in its historic and current manifestations) has dominated U.S. Christian culture (Marty, 1970; Smith, 1998) and in some cases has served to "other" Roman Catholics in racial terms (Ignatiev 1995; Miller, 1985).³ This Protestant supremacy showed itself in the second year in which I participated in the class, wherein both the Protestants and Catholic questioned whether or not the Roman Catholic faith tradition was a Christian tradition. Catholicism has also served as both a source of genocide and oppression for many in this country (Tinker, 1993), and as a source of cultural affirmation and survival for others (Haddad et al., 2003). How we sort out these complexities of Christian privilege makes the work especially rich and thorny.

The language of Christian supremacy resonates for me partly because I stand at the intersection of so many privileged identities.

Using this language prevents me from distancing myself as a progressive Christian from a tradition of domination whose history and current manifestation is nonetheless mine. I want to affirm the ways in which Christianity can provide special resources for the work of dismantling Christian and other forms of privilege: the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible and the person of Jesus interpreted as confronting oppressive establishments (Campbell & Rosenau, 2009; Borg, 1994). Having participated in two groups of Christians that have started this work, I am encouraged by its potential. Such work is – for some – an aspect of a deeper faith development, an inspiration to learn about other faith traditions, and a call to challenging Christian institutions to greater justice from the inside. Equally as compelling and inspiring to me are conversations coming out of a more radical reading of biblical scriptures encouraged by the challenges offered during the course of the class. For example, such investigations can help begin a process of recognizing the extent to which poverty and economics are at the heart of Jewish and Christian sacred texts (Boff & Pixley, 1989; Hoppe, 2004), and the ways in which Christian individuals and institutions have perpetuated class stratification as much as alleviated it (McCloud, 2007; Rieger, 1998). This can be a foundation for mobilizing Christian ideology not only for the purpose of disrupting Christian privilege, but for challenging class privilege as well.

Clark (2006) points out, however that the liberation strain of Christian theology and history makes the identification of Christian privilege difficult in social justice communities. A Christian, faith-based “calling” from God to social justice is part of what makes the work of confronting Christian privilege especially hard for individuals. She counsels Christians to recognize the obvious historical limits to the liberative nature of Christian theologies and traditions in their impact on social justice.

There are myriad theological challenges in this work. Obvious among them is the role of the Bible. Many students have not dealt with reconciling traditional interpretations of scriptures that they still hold (for example, the

subordinate place of women in family and church or the moral condemnation of non-normative sexual and gender identities) that are in conflict with more just and egalitarian views. The issue of the Bible and its interpretation is most clear as students struggle with what to do with the heart of the Christian tradition itself: the superior claim about the unique saving power of Jesus. The first caucus struggled with the biblical verse attributed to Jesus, “I am the way, the truth and life. No one comes to the Father except by me.”⁴ All over the country on Sunday mornings, circles of children are sitting around being taught with this phrase that they are superior to other children who do not come to God by Jesus. Even liberal Christians take such a practice as completely normal, and would deny such a verse intends to convey a superior stance. But doesn't it? If we watched a videotape of a white supremacist group training their children that “whiteness is the way, the truth, and the life,” we would be completely horrified. So what does it mean for ministers, social work practitioners, educators, and social justice workers to believe in sin, salvation, and hell? At first, some wanted to struggle with how they could continue to embrace these beliefs without seeming oppressive to others. Is there a less offensive but more loving, no less effective way of drawing people into a conversation about faith and salvation? I began to wonder if certain kinds of Christian beliefs and attitudes might be antithetical to anti-oppressive practice. Does a desire to engage in anti-oppressive practice ultimately mean sacrificing such beliefs and attitudes rather than forcing them underground? Many students imagined that rejecting such beliefs was an outright rejection of their faith in God. A dismantling of a privileged identity and its related oppressive institutions seemed a big enough challenge. That this work for Christians may also include dismantling a particular type of relationship with God and disrupting the interpretation of sacred texts seemed another.

The disruption of Christian privilege by challenging certain theologies and beliefs surfaces another unique issue for the work: Christians' training in “defending the faith.”

The work of disrupting Christian privilege can be taken as an assault on the very framework in which we are taught by certain verses in the Bible that if we are being faithful, we will be attacked. In this line of thinking, "true" Christians are not privileged by the faith, but persecuted for it. This thought was evidenced in students' minds by their experiences of what they viewed as hostility and marginalization as a result of their faith expressions during graduate school. The dialogue about these experiences, however, provided opportunity for contextualizing minority religious experiences in the Bible and throughout history that are not comparable to the context of Christian privilege in the United States today. This discussion also served to reinforce another important message that is sometimes difficult for allies (across many axes of difference): that the individual experience of discrimination is not the same as the experience of oppression. For example, while a male student may have a genuine experience of male-bashing from a colleague in a classroom – an experience that is abusive and counter to values of social justice – that does not mean that men as a group are oppressed (for further discussion, see Goodman, 2001).

As I begin to use the phrase Christian supremacist around the halls of my predominantly white, liberal, mainline Christian seminary, most students look at me like I have lost my mind. They primarily deny what I am saying by appealing to the rationalizations I used with myself. I am not the problem. I am marginalized within my own faith tradition. The Christian liberationist tradition is the antidote to oppression. Christianity called me into social justice work. I am not "one of those kind of Christians." Within this institution dominated by the superiority of Christian assumptions, however, those who are not Christian seem to understand exactly to what I am referring. For me, resonance with those who have been marginalized because of religious intolerance and Christian privilege is evidence that there is something true about the language I am using. If part of the point of doing this work is becoming a better ally in anti-oppression work with marginalized people, then I will take my

cues from those who are on the receiving end of Christian supremacy.

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(Footnotes)

¹ While this list of privileges continues to expand, the first source in which I encountered such a list was Schlosser, 2003.

² The class instructors modified theatre of the oppressed experiential exercises and techniques so they could be used to explore the experiences of privilege.

³ Ignatiev and Miller both document Irish emigrant and immigrant experience in the early U.S. colonies and the United States, including historic evidence of their racialization. Ignatiev documents in particular the ways in which the Irish use their European ancestry and whiteness in turn to repress African Americans.

⁴ John 14:6



NAMING PRIVILEGE IN A JUSTICE-CENTERED SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Heather Greene, MSW, Oregon Health & Science University

This narrative explores the specific commitment of social work to honor human and racial justice, as well as the profession's ability and responsibility to understand the complexities of injustice in the context of oppression. The author explores the effect of personal and professional privilege as it impacts social work relationships and professional outcomes, and ultimately how privilege informs professional worldview. Several case examples are utilized as vehicles for exploring how privilege impacts the client-worker relationship, and awareness of privilege is identified as a cornerstone of justice-centered social work practice

The more years I spend as a social worker the more appreciative I am of the life experience—both personal and professional—that so many social workers bring to our work. This gift sharpens the contours of our ability to support and honor people and communities in their healing process. The assets that we bring to our work, including an awareness of our own selves, may be especially unique within the field of social work, for in social work practice we use ourselves as tools with which to promote meaningful change. Our specific commitment to human and racial justice, combined with our ability to understand the complexities of injustice, provides us with both the opportunity and the responsibility to address the impact of oppression in the lives of the people and communities most in need of support.

Social workers are experts in understanding the impact of oppression in the lives of social work consumers. This is true because of the person-in-community lens through which we view people's life experience, as well as our dedication to working with and advocating for marginalized communities. This is also true because in our practice experiences we see, and therefore understand more clearly, the harsh impact of racism, sexism, homophobia, poverty, discrimination, hatred, and fear of those labeled as "other." Through micro, mezzo, and macro social work interventions, we dedicate ourselves to honoring the diversity of human

experience, challenging injustice and oppression, supporting and strengthening the voice of those silenced in our communities, while diligently advocating for justice and healing.

Our professional code of ethics mandates that social workers challenge injustice. This commitment is expressed with genuine sincerity, and it is because of our authentic intention toward equality that it can be difficult to recognize our own participation in (social) systems that perpetuate inequity. In social work classrooms, we do a good foundational job of learning to identify our own biases and the way these biases affect social work practice, but this conversation can fall short when it does not extend to an acknowledgment of the inherent privileges that many social workers carry with us into our daily work. Privilege, therefore, and more specifically the means through which we name and account for our advantages in social work relationships, has a necessary place at the table in this discussion.

Though the spectrum of social work providers can (and should) be as diverse as the communities we serve, there is an inherent privilege afforded those who have had the benefit of higher education, who are employed in skilled positions knowing they can provide financially for their families, and who enter into treatment relationships with professional expertise. While I recognize this conversation is complex, and acknowledge straightforwardly that social workers

represent the spectrum of human/cultural communities, I encourage us simultaneously to recognize that the intention of this conversation is to place our privilege in the context of our work and to recognize how privilege affects social work relationships and outcomes. To add to this conversation, I'll offer several stories from my practice.

As a hospital social worker I recently had the opportunity to work with a 2nd year graduate student who was near the end of her clinical practicum and was about to graduate. I was not her field instructor but was the professional social worker assigned to work with her for the day.

As I entered the Emergency Room office, the student was accepting a phone referral to meet with a homeless gentleman in order to refer him to a homeless shelter and assist with the necessary transportation before he was discharged. An ER staff member, working in our shared office, advised the student she would need to work quickly so that the man would not lose his shelter bed for the day.

It was early evening, and already the sun was starting to set. The student responded, without having even seen the patient, "I'll go see him, but I'm not giving him a taxi voucher. He can take the bus."

The student left and returned. "Some people are so needy" she reported. "I just knew he was going to want a taxi voucher. I just can't give those away to everyone who wants one."

Wanting to offer guidance to the student, I responded that I felt it was sometimes appropriate to consider using a taxi voucher for referrals we received in the evening, as it was starting to get cold and dark outside, and we had received the referral fairly late in the day.

To this the staff member reported, "You're being too kind. People are homeless for a reason."

Apparently finding comfort in this, the student agreed, "I know. He wanted to get some dinner, but he missed dinner in the ER. He just wanted everything. You know, he's going to be absolutely fine if he has to skip a meal."

At this point, feeling uncomfortable with the discussion the two were having, I offered, "You could give him a sandwich from the ER fridge to take with him."

The student responded, "Well, his nurse said she was going to try to find him one, but she wasn't sure if she could."

"We could just get it out of the fridge ourselves," I redirected, as was common practice in the Emergency Room. The student shook her head. "We're not supposed to get food out of that fridge anymore."

"Why not?" I inquired. "I usually just grab it and give it to people who need it. That's what the meals are there for."

"Well, it's such a big deal now. The fridge used to be right next to our old office, but since we moved offices, it's such a hassle to get to the sandwiches now."

It ended up that the student did provide the patient with a sandwich before sending him onto the shelter. However, she declined to send him in a taxi and I believe her experience with him confirmed her belief that he was, in fact, "needy." The ER staff member who encouraged this conversation validated this belief when she said that people were homeless for a reason. The staff member, the student, and I each entered into this conversation with a certain amount of privilege.

The student, who was about to graduate and remained quite confident in her assessment of the gentleman's motive, clearly expressed her own social class privilege, never having dealt with the complexities of nearly avoiding hunger with minimally available resources. Her actions and statements were a clear indication of her bias both against homeless people and also about what the role of an Emergency Room Social Worker should be. She minimized several fundamental social work lessons in this moment, including our responsibility to honor the integrity of each human person, as well as our commitment to support people in their healing process through a non-judgmental lens. While she might have viewed the act of providing a sandwich as a "hassle," her statements of resistance indicated that she clearly valued her own time and effort over the needs of the homeless gentleman, who in

fact was asking appropriately for assistance to make sure he was able to eat and get to his bed for the evening.

The staff member's broad statement of "people are homeless for a reason" was probably an indication of many previous encounters with homeless folks throughout her years of service. But this statement too shows a justification of pathologizing this man because of his homelessness. In fact, she knew nothing of this gentleman nor his story or struggle. It is a privilege to be able to apply judgment to people and their needs, and holds the potential for great harm when that judgment is the resulting alternative to a justice-centered, humanistic understanding of the complexities of inequity. It is also a clear example of the unique voice that social workers can offer in interdisciplinary settings, as our assessment and framework can balance those provided by the more traditional, medical model perspectives.

For myself, I've often thought back on this conversation and felt that I missed an opportunity to express my discomfort with the student. While I attempted to re-direct her, I chose to honor the fact that she was near completion of her practicum and that she had made her own assessment of the gentleman's needs. I was also mindful of the fact that I was not her supervisor. Here too, I chose my own comfort (non-confrontation) over the needs of the gentleman being served, despite the fact that I clinically disagreed with her assessment, and had more positional power and privilege. It remains its own example of the complexities of doing social work in an institutionalized setting such as a hospital, and is a clear reminder about the importance of our mandate to provide human service work through the lens of social justice.

On a separate day in the Emergency Room, I received a referral from a doctor in order to talk with a patient about outpatient medication assistance. I was told that the patient was "medication seeking" and that she frequently presented to the ER for pain management and medication. Balancing the referral against the other numerous tasks on my to-do list, I quickly printed off instructions to the outpatient pharmacy and approached

the woman's ER room. I knocked briskly at her room and identified myself as I entered. I was surprised to find the woman in the process of changing from her ED patient gown into her own clothes. Similarly surprised by my entrance, she held her gown to cover her bare chest and greeted me with questioning eyes.

Rather than offering her the opportunity to finish changing, I apologized for the intrusion and launched into my referral, providing the details of how and where to access the outpatient pharmacy. I also prepared her for the barriers she could expect at the pharmacy and how to address them if she did experience any difficulties. "Please call me if you have any questions," I told her, handing her the referral sheet. My conversation with her lasted less than 5 minutes.

As I exited her room I took in a breath and immediately realized my own mis-step in not offering the woman the opportunity to finish dressing in privacy before having to concentrate on my instruction. My careless ignorance of my own privilege in that moment meant that the woman was forced to listen uncomfortably to my instructions while remaining partially clothed and vulnerable as a result. My interaction with her silently but clearly communicated that my time was more valuable than hers. While I did communicate information to her I did nothing to support her holistic and psychological needs, something hospital social workers should always strive to achieve in our interactions with people, no matter how brief. Though I am grateful for the lesson I received upon reflection, I am mindful that this gain benefited only myself and not the woman, whose needs were primary. There was little I could do in that moment to negate my mistreatment of her. The damage was already done. The woman dressed, left the Emergency Room, and picked up her medications without further event.

Several weeks later, I received a similar referral and recognized the name of the same woman I had previously neglected. I entered the room and greeted her, careful this time to approach in a mindful and respectful manner though she showed no sign of recognizing me. With careful attention to her on-going pain needs, we engaged in a conversation that I

hope validated the daily difficulties she encounters as a person who lives with chronic pain and is often experienced, as I myself had treated her, as a medication-seeking patient rather than a person with complex medical needs and a difficult life experience.

Upon reflection of my second interaction with her, I left grateful for the opportunity to have offered amends, but also with the belief that our conversation meant more to me than to her. Despite my own commitment to a justice- and client-centered work ethic, this experience reminded me that my aspirations to acknowledge and account for the privilege and power dynamic in social work interactions require an ongoing dedication, and is a part of my continuing professional journey.

While only two examples of the shape that privilege can take in our practice, these stories serve as accurate descriptions of how we struggle to integrate our values and our actions, particularly where there is incongruence between the two. Despite having a mature understanding of oppression, social workers remain at risk of defaulting to socially constructed perceptions of marginalized communities. Rather than viewing this solely as a critique of our limitations, it should be viewed as an opportunity to develop our skills as critical, reflective social work practitioners. This examination raises the question: What does it truly mean to be an advocate for justice? How do we inspire change and how can we, through the lens of social work practice, co-create meaningful healing with vulnerable communities while working in oppressive systems?

Social workers come from a long line of respectable and thoughtful change-agents, social critics whose shared vision for equality and justice has meant dreaming into reality new solutions to age-old social problems. This is our heritage, and we must continue to find ways to celebrate our resiliencies while still holding ourselves accountable to the professional mandates that guide our work as advocates for equality. As human service workers with intention to respectfully and skillfully support people in their healing process, we are on a journey to become practitioners of justice. As our skill-level and self-awareness

develops, we must give ourselves permission to learn from our mistakes, identify missed opportunities for learning and growth, and must continue practicing from a place of best intentions. As we increase awareness of ourselves, and therefore understand more clearly the ways in which our interventions holistically affect social work systems and service recipients, we must respond by rededicating ourselves to strengthening an awareness of the privileges that benefit us in life and practice.

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TOWARDS ANTI-RACIST POLITICS AND PRACTICE: A RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Chris Crass, BA, The Catalyst Project

This narrative explores the anti-racist political development of a young activist in Orange County, California, in the early 1990s. Through leftist social justice work and efforts to protest in favor of an Ethnic Studies program, the author comes to a higher level of consciousness as a white person in a white supremacist society, and as an anti-racist working for democracy and justice.

“Don’t You Know What Color You Are?”

I was walking a picket line in front of the administration office at the college I attended, and I could feel the anxiety and tension growing. I knew that it would be unpopular to protest for Chicano Studies at Fullerton College in Orange County, California, but I didn’t know just what to expect. I had been to countless protests and actions over the years. Politicized at age 15, I went to protests against McDonald’s and factory farming, Shell Oil and apartheid, the Gulf War and militarism. But I knew this was different, though I wasn’t entirely sure why. That picket line, that experience of struggling for Ethnic Studies, of struggling for racial justice in a white supremacist society, was a catalyst that changed my life.

The protest for Chicano Studies was part of a series of actions initiated by a student coalition that had formed a semester earlier in 1993. When the coalition first formed, the main priority was fighting back against student fee increases. The State of California was cutting the budget for higher education while the prison budget swelled, and the costs that the cuts were no longer covering were being transferred to students as fee increases. The coalition was largely made up of Chicano/a nationalists from *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán* (MEChA, or *Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán*) along with the Black Student Union and white anarchists from the United Anarchist Front (UAF) – a part of the national Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation. Our

strategy was to link the fee hikes and the cuts in education to the growing prison budget. California was ranked number one in prison spending, and close to last in education spending. We did outreach using flyers to initiate conversations and led a couple of small actions to activate our members, generate publicity, and build energy on campus for a mass rally. We mobilized several hundred students to come to the rally (the largest rally the commuter school had seen in years), and our speakers represented a broad range of student organizations based in many different campus communities. The rally demonstrated—in who spoke and what we spoke about—the multiracial alliances we had built and the larger vision of a democratic social justice campus from which we operated. In fact, the rally was so successful it prompted retaliation from the administration. The majority of speakers at the rally were people of color, which reflected who was in the coalition. I was one of two white people who spoke at the rally and actively participated in the coalition. A week later, the other white student and I were called into the office of the Dean of Students.

I walked into the office, completely unaware of the reason for which I was summoned. When I sat down, a security guard was sitting on each side of me. A secretary took verbatim notes of the meeting, making me feel as if I were on trial. The Dean of Students informed me that I had been spotted vandalizing the school late at night with another white student from the coalition. The other

student was part of MEChA, but didn't come to coalition meetings and I had never met her before. A custodian identified us from pictures taken during the rally. We had supposedly been seen wheat-pasting huge posters of Governor Pete Wilson wearing Mickey Mouse ears. While I liked the poster, I would have chosen something more clearly related to our campaign. While we both, individually denied participation in this wheat-pasting, the Dean told me that we would be fined and expelled, our class units would be made non-transferable, and we would be arrested at some point during the week while in class. I couldn't believe it. I left that meeting full of fear, was scared and felt alone. David Rojas, the lead organizer in the coalition and my mentor found me and adamantly declared that we were going to fight this. "They are trying to divide us," he said. He went on to explain that the administration targeted us for two reasons. First, they assumed that it was the two white people who were leading the coalition, and second, they were afraid of multiracial organizing. It took me a while to understand why the administration would think that it was the white people in the lead.

We put flyers out everywhere. Each time we explained what the administration was doing, we felt more confident, more powerful. We were defining the debate and going on the offensive. We started an underground newspaper called *The Molotov Cocktail* ("serving one up for authority everywhere" was our tagline). The school newspaper, *The Hornet*, loved us and every week printed articles quoting from *The Molotov Cocktail*, and they ran guest editorials and letters to the editor written by members of the coalition and the UAF. Our demand to stop all fee hikes was widely supported by the student body. The Dean of Students eventually apologized for his accusations, and nothing happened to me or the other student. This was not the last time the administration would try to divide our multiracial alliance, but for now we were stronger and more united than ever. The semester was coming to an end. We had done some great work.

Around this time ads began appearing regularly in the school newspapers about how

fee hikes were the result of "illegal aliens" invading California. Concurrently, student actions on other campuses were taking place to create, defend, or expand Ethnic Studies programs. At UCLA, students had occupied an administration building and then launched a successful hunger strike. David, a working class anti-authoritarian Chicano Nationalist, suggested that members of MEChA and the UAF form a summer study group and read Howard Zinn's (1980) *A People's History of the United States*. Both groups agreed to do it.

We assigned a chapter between each meeting and planned to meet weekly. Our first session was half MEChA, half UAF. We didn't have a plan beyond an open discussion of what we thought of each chapter. We were scattered. Some participants jumped into explaining what they thought about a section, while many others had not read it and had no idea what the conversation was based on. We didn't have a facilitator or an agenda: not because we didn't want them, but because we didn't have a plan. Our interest in a study group exceeded our experience and skill level to run one. Twenty-five people came out for the second session and again, we had no plan beyond open discussion. People there were hungry to learn, but no one stepped into the role of teaching or leading a process by which people could genuinely share what they knew. Without focus, energy dissipated, and the most people never came back. A few of us in the UAF continued reading it and discussed it at the local coffee shop or over the phone.

While the study group didn't last long, reading Zinn was a powerful experience for those of us who finished it. Reading about the histories of race, class, and gender oppression and resistance in the United States was transformative. One of David's goals with the study group was to build energy in the coalition to fight for Ethnic Studies and Women Studies generally, and Chicano Studies in particular, and this goal was met. At that point I had already taken the only Black Studies class and Women Studies class, and was enrolled in Chicano Studies. Many of us in and around the UAF were taking these classes together, and they had a profound impact on us. As the

coalition talked about this change in our campaign, it didn't occur to me that shifting from fee hikes to Chicano Studies was also going to shift how people reacted to us: white people in particular. We were going from one important demand to another, and I thought people would continue supporting us. In retrospect, I was really naïve about the significance of this decision; but I quickly learned.

On September 16, 1993, a rally had been called in support of Chicano Studies. Busloads of high school students and college students from other campuses were going to come to Fullerton College for a march. David Rojas and I created a special issue of *The Molotov Cocktail* in which we wrote:

Last semester, much of our focus was directed on the rights of education for all. While we will continue with this struggle, it is also equally important that we fight for a quality education. We, as students, must remember that this is OUR education and that we must have a role in shaping the education process. Fullerton College does not meet up to the state and federal affirmative action guidelines and this affects us and our education. If there are classes that are not available to us, then we must demand them. We must reclaim our history! We must reclaim our education!

We also included statistics: of the previous 56 people hired by the university only 6 were people of color. The college population was 57% Anglo, 22% Chicano/a, 12% Asian Pacific Islander, 3% African American, and 1% American Indian. There was not one full-time African American professor on the entire campus.

The rally happened, hundreds of students showed up, and the energy was high. There were Mexican flags and speeches in Spanish. The students began to march into the streets of Orange County. It was both energetic and peaceful. Police in full riot gear were everywhere. The police surrounded the students and ordered them to end the march. Shortly thereafter, the police attacked the students with pepper spray and batons. High school and college students, most of whom were Latina/o, were hit and sprayed as they ran back to the campus.

I missed the march. I had left the rally early to go to work. It was a critical mistake on my part to have left, regardless of work. I should have been there. But at the time, I hadn't realized the significance of this march. I thought of it as just one of many marches, and I'd been to dozens. But the reality is this: when Latino/a students take to the streets of Orange County or anywhere in this country it is different from when mostly white activists do it. The threat of communities of color mobilized is enormous and it scares the police to their bones. I had read about white supremacy and called myself an anti-racist, but translating that into a way of understanding and acting in the world was a much longer process.

The reaction on campus to the student march for Chicano Studies was overwhelmingly negative. The school paper denounced the rally and march as being "anti-white," "angry," "provoking violence," and "counter-productive." The administration, the school paper, and the overwhelming majority of white students blamed the student coalition for the violence. Some called for MEChA's funding to be cut, arguing that it was a "hate group." Others blamed *The Molotov Cocktail*, saying that our encouragement to take the streets had urged young students to use violence. Very few outside of the coalition denounced the police violence.

For weeks there was constant debate on campus about Ethnic Studies. "We're not protesting to have white studies," we were told over and over again. "Chicano Studies is exclusive and narrow," we were informed. As a white student taking Chicano Studies, I tried to talk with other white students about it. I argued that Chicano Studies, like Western Civilization class, was something for all of us to take. A lot of white students responded with things like, "The books I read are written by white people, because that's who writes and that's not my fault." I would argue back that this is how white supremacy operates: whiteness is universalized as the norm. It does not require a conscious decision to have thoughts that are racist, as it is racism that shapes the structure of our thought: "It is not my fault that black people do not write books."

"It is not my fault that most of what is important was done by Europeans and European Americans." "I believe that all people are created equal, but it is not my fault that white people just do more." "We are not studying white people, we are studying the presidents of the United States, and it is not my fault that they all happen to be white." White supremacy is the tide that directs the flow of our thoughts. It does not require us to go out of our way to be racist. It just requires that we go with the flow of dominant ideology. I found it hard to even explain myself. I heard myself saying things that I knew weren't resonating with other white people, but I didn't know how else to say them and I didn't want to remain silent.

David and others in MEChA encouraged me to see my job in the coalition as trying to talk with white students, and in the process build support for our work amongst white people. They gave me support to keep trying and not give up. I wrote articles for both *The Molotov Cocktail* and *The Hornet*, and began identifying myself as white in my writing and when I spoke. I did this because white students who opposed the development of Chicano Studies wanted to say that this was just a bunch of "crazy Mexicans," members of the "hate group" MEChA. Furthermore, they often spoke as though they were raceless, "normal" students. They spoke with an air of authority, as though they represented normal society. I was claiming white identity to counteract those arguments, with the goal of creating a different debate. I wanted to put forward a different voice amongst white people, to break down the idea that this was fight between brown people and white people, and to create a visible alternative position other white people could take.

The coalition called for a picket at the administration building to pressure the president to hire more professors of color and expand Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies. We put out another issue of *The Molotov Cocktail* with articles about the history of white supremacy. I had asked a friend of mine from another school who had taught me a lot about the black liberation movement if he could write something about Ethnic Studies as a black student. I also asked white students who

worked alongside the UAF to write articles about why they support Chicano studies. We handed out the new issue and promoted the next demonstration for Ethnic Studies.

By the time I was in the picket line in front of the administration building, I could feel the anxiety and the tension growing. I was the only white person in the picket line. A white friend of mine who had been in Black Studies with me was coming, but when he saw the picket line and all of the angry white students, he left because he was afraid. I was scared too. By this point, our student coalition, which had once enjoyed popular support, was being denounced from all sides. The school paper slammed us for having abandoned "student demands" (fee hikes) and taking on "exclusive and divisive self-interest demands" (Chicano Studies). We had little visible support for our protest. Our picket line was about 30 people who were, aside from myself, all Latina/o. We were quickly surrounded by what seemed like hundreds of white students. They were yelling things at us like "Go home" and "We're not fighting for white studies." It felt like everything was in slow motion. I could hear white students screaming at me: "What are you doing with them?" "Don't you know what color you are?" "You fucking traitor!" It was surreal. I was really scared, but I knew strongly that I was on the right side of this picket line.

The picket line has weighed heavy on my mind over the years. It made me realize that being white is significant. It also made me question what being white meant. Why were those students yelling, "Don't you know what color you are?" I began to realize that white supremacy is all about creating and maintaining relationships of power based on skin color. I had read about it, but this was one of my first conscious experiences of it. White privilege is granted to white people on the condition that they maintain loyalty to this system. It doesn't require being an active racist per se, but just going with the flow. For standing in solidarity with Latina/o students, I was being called out as a traitor—I was threatened with physical violence from those white students. Now I wonder about the other people who were in that picket line. I was being denounced for organizing with Latina/o

students, but I have no way of understanding what it was like for them. For me, it was experiencing the reality of racism in my face.

David broke down the situation for me: "This is what happens to us all of the time. You're being yelled at for standing with us. We get this and worse, day in and day out, for being us." He didn't say it explicitly but I was beginning to understand the subtext of our conversation: I could leave this struggle any time I wanted to. They couldn't stop being Latino/a. But David wasn't trying to motivate me by guilt. He was clear that I needed to be in this struggle for my own liberation, and he pushed me to figure out what that meant.



Part Two: Movement Building and Challenging White Supremacy

"We shut down the WTO!" I could hardly believe it when the news was spread via messengers and mobile phones. Our blockades, our creative resistance, and our commitment to the earth and to justice had stopped the World Trade Organization (WTO). November 30th, 1999, was also a day that changed my life. I went to Seattle and joined my peers from the Food Not Bombs organization, most of whom were from San Francisco. After years of using consensus decision making, practicing civil disobedience, and utilizing direct action, it was amazing to see it come together on such a massive scale in Seattle.

Shortly thereafter, I read the essay "Where was the color in Seattle: Looking for reasons why the great battle was so white" (Martinez, 2000) which struck a chord with me. For years I had studied how race, class, and gender have played out in social movements throughout history. Racism and sexism have narrowed and undermined the labor movement. The white suffragettes of the late 1800's utilized racism to secure the vote

for white women. The sexism of the anti-war student movement catalyzed the feminist movement. The history of social movements is full of racism and other forms of oppression that undermined social change. When I read this history, I thought about organizing today and how to actively challenge these barriers and obstacles to movement building. When Martinez (2000) called out the ways that racism operated in Seattle, it was a profound awakening and opening. Her essay helped put Seattle and the global justice movement into a bigger picture and showed how white supremacy and white privilege create divisions within the movement today.

After Seattle, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out where to go next. I had graduated from San Francisco State University the previous May, and was in the process of transitioning out of my role as organizer at Food Not Bombs. For the previous two years, I'd been focusing more on developing as a writer. My overall goal with writing and organizing was to bridge race, class, and gender analysis of power with anarchist theory and practice. I knew that I wanted to focus on political education to create space for activists to study history and theory, and to learn organizing skills. In the middle of trying to make sense of what direction to move in, I had a dream.

It was a dream about power and the effects of internalized superiority on my mind. The effect that white privilege has on white people is a developed sense of internalized superiority over people of color. It need not be conscious, nor spoken of directly. Rather, white supremacy develops a framework of thought. It is related to the way that male privilege generates in men a sense of male superiority over women. In this case, guys can argue that men and women are equal, but still define reality through the perspective of male privilege (i.e., it's not my fault that most of the good books out there are written by men and that men do the most radical activism).

In my dream, I was at a party with some of my friends. I was the only white, middle class, and (mostly) heterosexual male at the party. There were women of color, transgender people, queer folks, older people, working class people, and me. In the dream, there were two

lines of thought going through my head. The first was straight up white supremacy, patriarchy, and heterosexism telling me that my friends were not good enough as people. Every imaginable hateful word flooded my mind. This calm, yet stern voice just repeated, "You know that these people are inferior you just can't admit it".

The other line of thought in this dream was that egalitarian relationships of power and respect were both necessary and right, and that these were my friends, people whom I care about, people who teach me a lot and who I'm lucky to have in my life. When I thought about this, about mutual respect and basic equality, my eyes dulled and my jaw dropped, and in my dream I turned into what looked like a zombie. When my thoughts returned to the "inherent deficiencies" of my friends, my eyes became clear; I heard the voice repeatedly saying, "Now you are facing the truth." I woke up drenched in sweat, trying to catch my breath.

I spent several days trying to make sense of that nightmare. I kept thinking about consciousness, and about how race, class, and gender oppression create both internalized inferiority and internalized superiority. It was hitting home that it's not just politically opposing racism, but that you have to work to undermine the impact racism has on your way of seeing and being in the world. White privilege functions in this way to both conceal and perpetuate racism: "It is not that you are worse than me, it's just that I'm better than you." My dream was about facing the truth of how domination distorts and disfigures one's humanity in a complex web of relationship based on oppression, privilege, and power. It led me to start writing about and thinking much more about the process of decolonization for those who have been socialized to be in positions of privilege.

For years I've looked to the writings of women of color feminists like Barbara Smith, bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Hill Collins, Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez, M. Annette Jaimes, Karín Aguilar-San Juan, Chinosole, Mino Moallem, Audre Lorde, Cherríe Moraga, and Angela Davis for wisdom, inspiration, and guidance. I began

struggling analytically to use the concepts, tools, insights, analysis, and perspectives of women of color feminism to undermine internalized white superiority, unmask white privilege, and recognize possible paths for people with systemic privilege to work toward a healing and healthy humanity. The question on my mind was: "What does anti-racist work look like for white people and how do we do it?"

I had been going to an anti-racism study group for about six months. Sharon Martinas, of the Challenging White Supremacy (CWS) workshop, put the study group together. It was a mostly white study group looking at anti-racism organizing in predominately white communities. My favorite things about it were that it was multigenerational, and that we were of multiple political perspectives: feminist, Marxist, anti-imperialist, and/or anarchist.

Sharon Martinas had been doing anti-racism workshops and trainings in the Bay Area for over six years. The CWS workshop was designed as two 15-week sessions: CWS for activists, and then CWS for organizers. One day on the way back from a study group session, Sharon asked if I would be interested in developing a workshop series together specifically for organizers in the anti-global capitalism movement. Both Sharon and I were deeply inspired by the Martinez (2000) essay and we began putting together a workshop called "Beyond the Whiteness in Seattle: Challenging white supremacy in the movements against global capitalism."

The workshop spanned four sessions. We met on Tuesday nights during the summer leading up to the 2000 Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Los Angeles. We used role-plays, small group exercises, presentations, and discussions to look at how white supremacy impacts our work, and we studied assigned readings between sessions. We broke white supremacy down into racial oppression against communities of color and white privilege for white communities. We analyzed white privilege and racial oppression as two sides of the same coin, both maintaining systematic inequality that punishes the majority of the planet and its inhabitants in the service of profit and power. We stressed the importance of overcoming feelings of guilt

around racism, and the need for action based on the analysis that non-ruling class whites are both privileged and oppressed.

I was really nervous doing this first series of workshops. Having been one of the few white people in Ethnic Studies courses, and often one of the only men in Women's Studies classes, I was used to having people question my motivations and intentions. I was used to people wondering, "What the hell is that white guy doing here?" This time, my nervousness stemmed in part from fearing that people would wonder, "What the hell is this white guy doing co-training a course on anti-racism?" In fact, people *were* thinking this, and frankly I'd have been worried if no one did. I believe facing contradictions and difficult situations that make you feel awkward and vulnerable is necessary in doing this work.

It was critical to go through this experience with a mentor, and I was fortunate to have two. Sharon Martinas, whom I co-trained with and who is an incredible educator and organizer, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, who was hosting the workshop in her home.² Roxanne is a long time radical historian, author and activist who has spent years doing anti-racist and feminist work. She grew up poor working class in Oklahoma, the daughter of a landless white farmer and a half-Indian mother. She started a group called Cell 16 in the late sixties that helped launch the women's liberation movement. Roxanne was also active in the anti-war movement and worked with the American Indian Movement. She continues doing solidarity work with indigenous groups around the world fighting for self-determination. She has also been researching and writing about the impact of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism on white people, and wrote the memoir *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie*. I was glad we were meeting at Roxanne's house, as she was the one who convinced me to go to Seattle and actually bought me a plane ticket to make sure I went.³ She told me that it would change my life, that all of the years of day-to-day organizing with Food Not Bombs would manifest on the streets, and that I needed to be there. She was right, and that experience led directly to the anti-racism training we had

organized at her house, preparing for the DNC in Los Angeles.

Going to the DNC was a powerful experience, and it reconfirmed for me the importance of white people doing anti-racist work. The workshops that Sharon and I organized were directed primarily at other white activists, though activists of color were always welcome to participate. We did this out of a belief that white radicals have a responsibility to talk about and work on racism with white people, and that it is not the responsibility of activists of color to school white people. In Los Angeles, well-thought out organizing was happening that actively combined international issues of global capitalism with local struggles for justice. Many of the local struggles were led by organizations of color. There was a lot of confusion and debate among activists from other parts of the country about how the actions in L.A. went down. Why were there legally permitted marches? Why weren't people doing massive civil disobedience? This brought me back to thinking about the protests for Ethnic Studies in Orange County: specifically, that action taken by people of color is different than action taken by white activists. The stakes are higher and calls for justice in communities of color fundamentally challenge the logic of white supremacy that people of color do not deserve justice. I saw how important it was for white anti-racists to talk with other white activists about this in L.A.

After the four-part workshop series, Sharon and I put together a six-part series called *Beyond the Whiteness*. I began doing one-time workshops for activist groups and conferences around the country. The workshops were really successful at getting people excited about this work and developing useful skills and analysis. Out of the last workshop series, an ongoing discussion group formed. The group's goals were to form a community of learning; to have a peer group of organizers to look at how to incorporate anti-racism into our projects, groups, and campaigns; and to train people to do workshops themselves (including skills like creating agendas and exercises, timing discussions, and creating empowering group dynamics). The

discussion group also helped to develop a community of anti-racist activists.

One of the tactics utilized in the workshop that was extremely useful for all of us was the "Each One, Teach One" model. Sharon and I met with people one-on-one and talked about anti-racism and people's organizing projects, and offered feedback and help when useful. It was used extensively in the Southern Civil Rights Movement as a way to not only teach people and bring them into the movement, but also as a process of developing relationships, trust, and respect. For me, this is an extremely helpful way for us to grow as a movement and for us to deepen the work that we do. Mass actions and mass mobilizations are necessary, but we also need to do the day-to-day work of sharing skills and building our capacities as organizers and radicals. That's one of the biggest lessons of Seattle for me: that it's not just about large numbers of people - we can all be active participants in the movement.

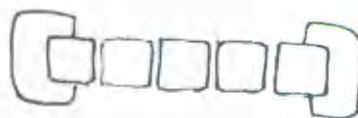
Our strategy, as CWS, was to do anti-racist training and organizing specifically with predominately white grassroots social justice activists. We also worked from the belief that multiracial, anti-racist alliance building is at the core of doing this work. Our focus on anti-racism with other white people was part of a long strategy of working towards a multiracial, anti-racist movement to oppose capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and heterosexism.

To further this long-term strategy in the global justice movement, several of us in the movement started up a grassroots network called Colours of Resistance (COR). Helen Luu, a working class anarchist immigrant organizer, initiated a conversation with Pauline Hwang, a middle class student organizer, and myself about our shared goals for a stronger anti-racist commitment and practice in the mostly white anti-global capitalism movement. We also wanted to see a higher level of mostly white groups working towards multiracial alliances with community-based organizations. Helen worked in Toronto and Pauline in Montreal. We exchanged emails about our backgrounds, politics, experiences, and visions, and developed goals for a project to help amplify

the anti-racist voices in the global justice movement and help connect people with a shared analysis. We drafted a vision statement, launched a webpage, we started up an email discussion group and recruited people to join it, and we are all involved in local work that reflects our politics.

We conceived of COR as a network for organizers of color working in communities of color around these issues who wanted to be in relationship with white anti-racists doing anti-racism work with predominately white groups. COR is intended to facilitate people supporting one another, sharing experiences and lessons, learning about work in other areas, and developing strategy together. We intended this framework to provide a way for radicals of color and white radicals to build relationships based on respect, trust, and friendship.

While COR started as a relatively small group of people (a couple dozen), our goal was not related to numbers, but rather publicizing our strategy and putting anti-racist, multiracial alliance building politics out into the broader movement. So while I was doing workshops and trainings, others were working with local groups doing teach-ins and educational work on the impacts of global capitalism on communities of color, and on resistance from communities of color to global capitalism. Doing alliance-building work with radicals of color with whom we have political affinity is critical for white anti-racists, as white activists cannot and should not do this work alone.



So why do I do anti-racist work, and why is it such a priority? Well, let me tell you one more story. When I was in high school I worked with the United Anarchist Front, which was a group of close friends (mostly white) who did political work together. We put out dozens of informational flyers, published an underground newspaper, and held protests against everything from apartheid in South Africa to the Gulf War. We did good work and it was fun. But we would always complain

about how apathetic the school was and how great it would be to work with other people. Years later, I was looking at a copy of our high school newspaper for which I wrote a regular column called "Love and Rage" (named after the anarchist network we were part of and the newspaper it produced) about activism and politics. Right next to my column was a guest editorial written by three Latina women protesting the lack of coverage of the Latino student population. They also called attention to the lack of coverage in the yearbooks and the school videos, and the overall disinterest shown by white students in activities organized by the Spanish language club, Expanded Horizons. Here were students who were angry and ready to take action about issues impacting them on the campus.

I found their column years later going through old papers. I don't remember reading it at the time, and was totally surprised to see it. I wondered how we'd missed it. In retrospect, I think that the issues of language, culture, and representation they raised didn't register for me. Their issues weren't "radical" as I would have defined them in high school. This is an example of how white privilege shaped my worldview and hurts the ability of white radicals to see other people and struggles. I remember once that the UAF thought about translating one of our flyers into Spanish, but we certainly didn't think that we might have something to learn from those students about conditions in the school, about racism on campus, or about what issues to organize around on a campus of which over one-third of the students were Latino/a. How radical would it have been if a group of white high school students worked in solidarity with a group of Latina/o high school students to demand an end to racism on campus! In a state like California, where a majority of voters have passed anti-immigrant rights and anti-bilingual education measures, such solidarity and anti-racist activism is critical.

Doing anti-racist work as a white person doesn't mean no longer making mistakes, but rather that I am committed to doing this work, even though I make mistakes. I'm continuing to do anti-racist organizing because I have hope for our abilities to make history and transform

this society. I have hope because there is a radical vision of love at the heart of our movement and it is growing. There is a long history of white supremacy undermining many social movements, but together, I believe, we can make anti-racism a catalyst for building ours. Our movement is built day-by-day with visions of the world we want seven generations down the line.

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Chris Crass is the coordinator of the Catalyst Project, a center for political education and movement building based in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Catalyst Project is committed to anti-racist work in majority white sections of left social movements, with the goal of deepening anti-racist commitment in white communities and building multiracial left movements for liberation. Catalyst creates spaces for activists and organizers to collectively develop relevant theory, vision, and strategy to build our movements. Catalyst programs prioritize leadership development, supporting grassroots fighting organizations and multiracial alliance building. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: chris@collectiveliberation.org

(Footnotes)

¹ The following semester the administration again tried to break the multiracial alliance in the coalition. The President of the school called MEChA leaders to a meeting. The President, who is white, had never called a meeting with MEChA before and stood against all the demands of the coalition. He served them lunch and said he wanted to warn them that MEChA's future funding might be jeopardized by working with anarchists. Furthermore he warned that MEChA's reputation was at risk, as word was spreading that they were being led by white anarchists. The MEChA members immediately came laughing to us with the news. The next issue of *The Molotov Cocktail* covered this story, and included the line, "The anarchists want to meet next, they're vegetarian, and they want beer."

² I met both Sharon and Roxanne at the movie rental store I worked at.

³ This was during the time when San Francisco Food Not Bombs (FNB) was facing arrest from the Brown administration, and several of us committed to stay behind and keep things together. With Roxanne's encouragement, we covered our bases at home and joined with FNBBers in Seattle.

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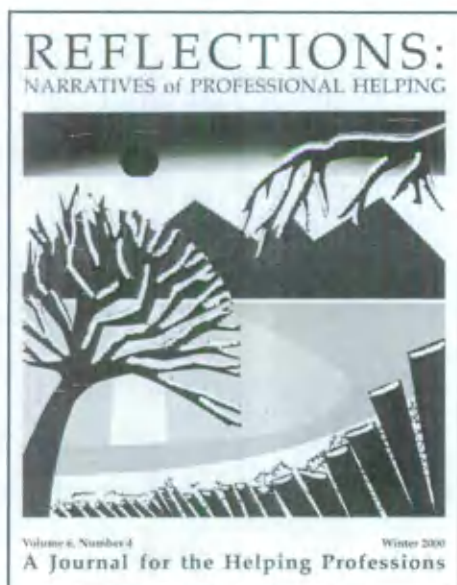
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