

WILLA

A Journal of the Women in Literacy and Life Assembly of the
National Council of Teachers of English

Volume 18

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Editors' Note

Volume 18 of *WILLA* features a collection of nine articles and includes information about the Editorial and Executive Boards and Trustees, the Inglis Awards, a call for manuscripts, and membership. All of the articles offer insights on the impact of gender in language, literature, and life. We invite you to read and respond to these selections and in ways that give you agency for voice and action on issues, challenges, accomplishments, and potentials they present.

This volume of the journal leads with two articles that focus on figures prominent to the history or, more appropriately in this case, the "herstory" of changes in women's roles and lives and connections between these individuals and contemporary trends in society. The first of these, Martha Diede's "Subtle Evasions: Mary Sidney and Social Expectations for Women's Private Roles," examines women's public and private persona from past to present. The second piece is "Our Debt to Mary Wollstonecraft, Moral and Intellectual Pioneer for Women" by Susan Roberts, who links history and her story as an instructor of women preparing for service and leadership right along with men at the U. S. Coast Guard Academy.

The next three articles focus on professional issues, opportunities, achievements, and images from the perspectives of women with different careers, paths, charges, and responsibilities as educators. In the first, Connie Mietlicki presents a close look at what one state is doing to improve childcare, a critical concern for many women, and relates the experiences of four women who take advantage of career ladders that enable them to become professionals and "Women Who Make a Difference in the Lives of Children." In "Professional Conversations on 'What Not To Wear' and Other Essential Advice for Female Pre-service Teachers," ten tips for helping teacher candidates develop awareness of relationships between professionalism and image are offered by authors Shelly Bowden, Tracye Strichik, Carolyn Corliss, and Ronnie Griffon. The third piece, "Narrative Reflexivity in Raced and Gendered Spaces," brings three vignettes depicting experiences of Terri Rodriguez to readers and shows how she integrates her experiences as a gringa teaching English in Puerto Rico into her work with Latino/a pre-service teachers in the mid-western United States.

The third and last set of articles focuses on the research and practice written about by four educators with students ranging from the university level to second grade. In "Weaving New Understandings of Teacher Research as a Feminist Practice," Mary Naploi explores relationships between teacher research and feminism, issues of identity and authority, and why she believes that story is the "foundation of teacher research and personal and professional change." Donna Mahar shares the results of her research on images constructed by young women in "Reading Fabrics of Choice: A Study of Women's Redesign of Popular Media to Grow Voice and Social Identity" and paints vivid portraits of participants' use of media to redefine images of success. The last two articles are testimonies

to the impact of children's literature and educators who teach their students to critically read and evaluate gender and racial images presented in literature. In "Why Does She Hear the Heartbeat? Helping Pre-service Teachers Question Power and Gender in Children's Literature," Donna Mahar reports findings from a study that engaged teacher candidates in strategic tactics aimed at revisioning representations of women and men in widely read picture and chapter books. The last article by Cheron Hunter Davis is entitled "Am I a Keeper of the Dream? A Critical Reflection of *The Dreamkeepers*, 20 Years Later." This selection explores racial images in children's literature and achievement gaps between Black and White children across decades and identifies culturally sensitive and relevant teaching practices documented by research as effective and made possible by a growing body of literature written by and about African-Americans.

All of the works in this volume of *WILLA* offer readers gifts of knowledge, glimpses of teaching and learning, research findings, and personal wisdoms based on observations and experiences. These articles highlight relationships between gender and other images that permeate language and literature and structure life expectations and opportunities. We hope that readers will be inspired by these writings and messages about the power and potential of individuals as agents of change in society that they convey.

Sincerely,
Edna Brabham
Hannah Furrow

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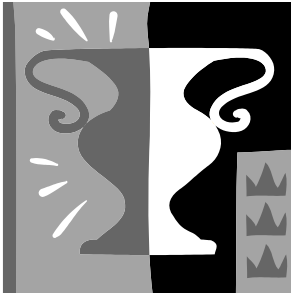
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Each year, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) recognizes an Outstanding Woman in English Education with an award named for Rewey Belle Inglis, the first woman president of NCTE. All women considered for this honor will have exhibited outstanding professional service relating to the role and image of women in the profession and in NCTE. The Inglis Award recipient will have shown excellence in scholarship/research, teaching, and service related to English language arts. The Inglis Award committee, made up of members of the Women in Literacy and Life Assembly of NCTE (WILLA), is charged with selecting the recipient of the Rewey Belle Inglis Award. Please send a letter of nomination detailing how the nominee's qualifications match the award criteria and a copy of the nominee's curriculum vitae to:

Dr. Lynne Alvine, Inglis Award Chair
110 Leonard Hall, 121 North Walk
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For full consideration, nominations should arrive by June 1. The recipient will be notified of her selection and will be honored at the CEE Luncheon at the annual NCTE Convention.

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS



WILLA

A Journal of the Women in Literacy and Life Assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English

We invite contributions to the journal that represents varied perspectives, formats, and voices focusing on gender-related issues in literacy teaching and learning, including the status and the image of women and girls, men and boys. *WILLA* publishes critical essays, teaching strategies for all levels, bibliographies, interviews, personal essays, short stories, poetry, and other creative works. Each manuscript should be no more than 12 double-spaced pages in current APA style. *WILLA* is a blind peer reviewed online journal. Place the author's personal and institutional identification including an e-mail address on the cover page only. Deadline for submission for *WILLA* is June 25, 2012. All submissions by this date will be considered. Send manuscripts as Word documents by email to:

Kathie Macro and Alena Bogucki

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Subtle Evasions: Mary Sidney and Social Expectations for Women's Private Roles

By Martha Diede

Like never before, women and men have public personas, and the actions of the private person have consequences for the public person. The advent of MySpace, Facebook, and Google+, for example, has given every member a public persona that masquerades as a private one, although it is easily searchable in a few seconds with an internet connection. Much like Early Modern commonplace books in which people wrote down quotes they found particularly applicable to their lives or recorded small and large life events, Facebook and similar social networking sites serve as a record of daily activities, thoughts, and sometimes quotes for individual members. Then, as now, those women whose lives cannot be fully chronicled by social media, find that the news networks may take up the slack. Unlike the commonplace book and other private literary pieces that women then wrote for themselves or to circulate among trusted friends, social media now brings with it an inherent danger of public overexposure, an online reputation that anyone can find with an internet connection. The Early Modern woman called her pre-electronic version of this problem publicity. Just as today's smart users care about the degree to which unsavory users can access their information and what they post online, smart women and men in Elizabethan England took great care to maintain their good public reputations. Although Elizabethan society allowed men to have public lives while preserving their private lives at country houses or simply at home in the city, that same society dictated that women avoid public life as much as possible.

Essentially, women were to tighten their security settings to “Friends Only” and avoid any other public comment. For Elizabeth Tudor and her ladies, however, this dynamic created some tensions much like those that many women experience today. These women could not truly avoid building and maintaining a public persona with the attendant difficulties of maintaining a good name; at the same time, they could not truly avoid social mandates to preserve themselves as private citizens whose reputations serve only to build the good (or bad) reputation of the families into which they were born and into which they were married. For Elizabeth and the ladies of her court, as for women now such as Hillary Clinton, Angelina Jolie, and Katherine Middleton Windsor, social and news networks offer undeniable benefits while posing unavoidable risks to both their public and private lives.

Given such ongoing tensions between public and private life, readers should not be surprised that female figures who earlier navigated such contests became objects of fascination for the Early Modern reader, perhaps models of ways to navigate between public and private life both then and now. Particularly as a woman whose public and private lives combined to produce the fall of Egypt and a great Roman general, Cleopatra in all of the recounting of her story provides both a model and a warning for women who find or seek a public life but also hope to maintain a private one. Like her, Mary Sidney, Philip Sidney’s sister and literary executor, also serves as a model of a woman who navigated the tricky waters of public and private life. Although much of Sidney’s effort went to establishing and preserving a specific kind of reputation for her brother (she altered his *Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* to make it less racy), she also produced a number of translations

of her own. Her translation of Garnier's *Marc Antoine*, which appeared 10 years before Shakespeare's *Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*, does not attract much critical attention, although both the original and the translation clearly reveal women's concerns with the production of public and private, present and future, reputation. Scholars sometimes assert that translation merely represents authorized women's writing, and then focus on the intricacies of her *Psalms*.ⁱ When they examine it at all, critics occasionally consider *The Tragedy of Antonie* as a part of the long-standing tradition of mindfulness of one's own death or as part of the accompanying tradition of dying well after having lived with meaning, a tradition which greatly interested Sidney.ⁱⁱ In many respects, *The Tragedy of Antonie*, a retelling of what would become the familiar story of Cleopatra and Antony at their deaths, participates in the same tradition as *Tuesdays with Morrie* or "The Last Lecture." *Antonie* highlights the importance of recognizing the inevitability of death and of living meaningfully. But despite the title's focus on Antony, the play concentrates on Cleopatra and her failed attempt to balance public and private lives. For Cleopatra, the conflict between public and private responsibility leads to a suicide that expresses her marital love and seems to return her to a traditionally female role (5.1-27; 92-116; 137-208). In contrast, Antony hopes that his suicide will restore his reputation, tainted by his neglect of public duties (3.376-80). In this he develops a pattern followed by such men as Bill Clinton, who lied about his private life in a public forum, was publicly punished for so doing, but in later years has recreated a persona that is again suitable for public life. Despite the masculine title of her translation, Mary Sidney's *The Tragedy of Antonie* seems to focus on concerns primarily associated with

women and with women writers. The very act of translation positions Mary Sidney in a writing tradition deemed appropriate for women, camouflaging her repeated transgression of the line between public and private. While appearing to engage in both literary and cultural reputation-building in which women who die well after having lived meaningfully significantly increase the likelihood of their posthumous remembrance, the play also problematizes that public, posthumous reputation.

Translating a play in which a queen experiences tremendous role conflict between public political life and private love life parallels to some degree Mary Sidney's decision to make public her private translation of a play and other works, thereby creating public reputation that will outlive her regardless of the potential censure such actions might attract (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 17). Translation is a genre considered "appropriate" for women; however, publicizing those translations is not. Cleopatra straddles a similar divide: a woman, traditionally a private person in Early Modern England (Stallybrass 123-42), she must develop and perform as a queen. So, she wields remarkable public power which guarantees her place in people's memory. In this duality, the Cleopatra that Sidney presents for her Early Modern readers much resembles Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama who have had to navigate the continuing divide between public and private life while aware that their remarkable positions ensure enduring public attention. However, as all women know, painful trade-offs are inevitable. Thus, for Cleopatra to save Egypt from Roman domination, she must induce Caesar not to tyrannize Egypt, however great her private sacrifice. Her secretary Diomedes fully believes that Cleopatra, as queen, can save her nation, but Diomedes also clearly reveals the public

and private lives that Cleopatra must negotiate (2.499-504). So Cleopatra must decide how to manage Antony, Caesar's representative. In the trade-off, Cleopatra may save her country, but lose Antony; or she may lose Antony, but save her country. These choices pit the public queen Cleopatra against the private lover Cleopatra. No matter her choice, every retelling of her story—whether by her Egyptian waiting women and subjects, conquering Roman soldiers, or future generations of historians, writers, playwrights, and translators—will inevitably show her privileging one role over the other. Every time an actor re-presents her on stage, that actor publicizes the conflict between these two roles, and for the moment of the play, creates a reputation for Cleopatra that highlights the tension between public and private. Hidden and revealed behind such materiality (Jones and Stallybrass) is Sidney the translator, for reading, performing, or viewing her translation publicizes her work while insisting on her privacy by shifting attention to the “original writer,” Garnier. Her reputation as a “proper” woman writer both maintained by and subsumed into the “original” text, hiding in plain sight behind Cleopatra's role conflict and the reproach her actions draw.

The Tragedy of Antonie publicizes Mary Sidney's personal concerns with her own and with her brother Philip Sidney's public and posthumous reputations, each of which had to follow socially accepted, gendered patterns. Because of the social strictures women faced with regard to public life, Mary Sidney relies on her personal relationships and the literary circle that gathered at her estate to create openings for her to produce work as a literary figure in her own right. Her brother Philip faced no such restrictions. He published original works such as *A Defense of*

Poesie, Astrophil and Stella, and *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, significantly dedicated to his sister, as a way to bolster his public reputation as a well-rounded courtier and to enjoy public praise for his political and religious stances as well as his literary skills. For Philip, his literary reputation was important to his public, political career, particularly after Elizabeth had banished him from court for espousing thoroughly militant Protestant opinions. In his private country life, Philip generated literary work, including translations of the Psalms with his sister. Philip's efforts to rehabilitate his image with Elizabeth was successful enough that she directed him to command military operations in the Netherlands as the English sided with Dutch Protestants to beat back Roman Catholic Spanish occupation. Philip Sidney was thus able to use his private life to produce and to rehabilitate an effective public persona. Very much aware of Philip's public status, Mary took care that after his death his originally authored works appeared appropriate to his public status as a learned literary courtier. Due in part to her efforts, Philip Sidney's literary reputation outlives him. Mary Sidney, however, continued to operate in the tensions similar to those experienced by Cleopatra. Thus Mary contributed primarily translations, yet these literary efforts still demonstrate her exceptional linguistic and literary capacity, all the while contributing to her pretense that she did not write original texts and lived exclusively as a private person.

Unsurprisingly then, the appropriateness of public reputation to the person is of great concern throughout the play and the tensions between public and private lives seem to publicize Mary Sidney's own concerns. For example, the heroine, Cleopatra repeatedly emphasizes even Antony's once and future reputation, albeit

negatively. Describing his response to her departure from the sea battle, she observes, "By this base part / [he blasts] his former flourishing renown" (2.209-10). Like Cleopatra, Antony comprehends that their private love affair has overtaken his public responsibilities and thereby damaged his reputation, much like contemporary male politicians or pastors who face public scorn after private extra-marital sex. Like such politicians and pastors, Antony knows that he has shamed himself by choosing to behave as a private person and not as a public figure: he calls Cleopatra the "idol of [his] heart" (1.5). A public man, he cannot choose heart over head, for such a choice is unacceptable, even scandalous. He, too, must make a choice, but the fate of his children and a nation do not hang on his choices. As Antony's general Octavius's presence shows, other men may become generals and lead Antony's troops thereby redeeming the purpose of Antony's public life, and as the absence of his wife in this play indicates, he can brush aside his Roman private life by claiming the demands of travel inherent in his public role.

Much like Philip Sidney who accepted a dangerous battlefield assignment in the Netherlands as part of a strategy to restore his public persona, Antony clearly sees his own suicide within a Roman framework: death at his own hand may help to repair his public image. Preparing to kill himself, Antony declares, "I must deface the shame, of time abused, / I must adorn the wanton loves I used, / With some courageous act" (3.377-79). However, when Cleopatra sends for him, he casts aside even that paltry honor. Bleeding from a self-inflicted wound, Antony allows Cleopatra to haul him up the monument to her. He dies in her arms, not on the battlefield with his men. Once a promising military leader, Antony dies derelict from

his duties. The qualifying implication that “he could have been great but for Cleopatra” hangs over Antony’s future reputation. Such tainted renown implies that a man’s decision to privilege private love over public duty is unacceptable. Significantly, contemporary society continues to insist on this line, demanding that politicians and pastors whose private lives interfere with public ones must commit a kind of career suicide by resigning from their public posts. Faced with a scandalous relationship to a female intern, Bill Clinton decided not to resign the presidency of the United States; Congress responded by impeaching him, thus preserving the social code that requires men to privilege public over private life. Having paid such penance, however, Clinton has been able to rebuild his reputation and now can fully engage in public life. Jim Bakker is another such example: publicity surrounding his extra-marital sexual relationship led to investigation and a prison term. Having served his time, Bakker has also been able to rebuild his public role, again running a television show. Regardless their seeming recovery, the fact remains that for such men as Clinton, Bakker, and Sidney’s Antony, their stories retold will consistently include the moments when they chose private over public life, the condemnation they receive, and the steps necessary to restore their public roles.

Clearly, choosing between public and private concerns affects how people remember Cleopatra and Antony, but gendered expectations make Cleopatra’s privileging of her private life acceptable in a way that Antony’s is not. Antony’s lover, Cleopatra refers to herself using the socially acceptable designation “wife” (2.320). Also, when Eras reminds Cleopatra that she is a noble queen (2.181-87), she responds as a “fearful woman” instead (2.219). Fleeing the sea battle, Cleopatra

does not seek to preserve herself from capture or Roman triumph, but to prevent Antony from returning to Octavia (2.227-28). To do so, Cleopatra invokes her public position as queen, her public persona, to prove her faithful love for Antony, a matter of her private person. Tragically, but again matching gender expectations, her private affairs consume her public person; she elects to produce a future reputation focused more on her private life than on her public persona, and returning to the private role expected of women. Cleopatra chooses to die with Antony, leaving her children alone and her country conquered. She proclaims:

[I] The crown have lost my ancestors me left,
This realm I have to strangers subject made,
And robbed my children of their heritage.
Yet this is nought (alas!) unto the price
Of you dear husband, whom my snares entrapped.

(5.12-16)

She bewails her choice, but even recognizing its potentially dire public consequences, she does not change her mind.

Cleopatra's private love for Antony so consumes her that neither Euphron nor Diomede can convince Cleopatra to live, not even by invoking a competing public/private responsibility which will produce reputation and specific memories—motherhood. Although privately conceived with Antony, Cleopatra's children represent a public duty, their presence a constant reminder of her reign: they will physically resemble her, and more important, they will inherit Egypt (Wilcox 58-60; Wiesner 5-8). By making their later escape possible, she guarantees

psychological, tangible memories of herself that will survive and a reputation to go with them. Moreover, by choosing public suicide for herself, she manages her future public reputation: those retellings of her life will not present her as vanquished monarch and failed mother, but as a tragic figure of doomed love. Fitly to conclude her future public story, Cleopatra does not admit Antony when he arrives at her monument because she fears her own capture (4.282-86). Instead, she lets down a cord and draws him up, planning to die as his wife, but visually reinforcing her dual public and private roles. Egyptian servants and Roman soldiers see a conquered queen who chooses death over captivity yet postpones her demise long enough for her lover to come to her so that they will die together. This decision, however, backfires, transmogrifying her future memory: instead of remembering her as the valiant warrior queen, her children and her people will recall and retell the story of a woman ultimately doomed by intense love (or lust). Even in orchestrated death she cannot escape conflict between public concerns—her role as Queen of Egypt and mother of the future rulers of Egypt—and private attachments—her beloved Antony. Though Euphron reminds Cleopatra that children could face a life of bondage because of Cleopatra's suicide (5.30-33), Cleopatra still opts to die with her "husband."

Despite the fact that her elaborate production of drawing a bleeding Antony to her will almost certainly ensure posthumous public-private renown, Cleopatra, much like Mary Sidney and many women to follow, does remember those she will leave behind: she does her best to provide for the welfare of her children, whom she hopes will outlive her. In so doing, she attends to the quintessential private female

role—that of motherhood. Having given her children attention by planning for their care and education, Cleopatra reveals that she fully comprehends the difficult position in which those children will now find themselves. Technically illegitimate, they are nonetheless heirs to Egypt. In them Cleopatra's public and private lives collide. As a woman with a public duty to produce heirs, she conducts a sexual relationship with Antony despite the fact that he cannot marry her and the fact that he represents an empire known for hostile takeovers of neighboring territory. She knows that the children from such a liaison will face challenges in their own public and private lives, for their family reputations will be forever entangled with the reputations of their parents. Still, by choosing to conceive and bear children, Cleopatra fulfills the public role of queen by providing heirs to succeed her. She also takes on the very private, exclusively female role of motherhood. But even that private function, as Elizabeth Tudor and Diana Windsor knew, is entangled in public function. In her last attempt to fulfill maternal responsibility despite her political one, Cleopatra commands that her children forget their royal blood and depart with Euphron before sealing herself in the tower to die publicly. This public display offers at least a hope of public distraction so that her children might disappear from public life unnoticed, thereby preserving a small hope that they might one day return to power and safeguarding part of Cleopatra's private life. This episode demonstrates the tensions that women face: blame attends their choice of public over private life at any time. Regardless of the actual survival of Cleopatra's children, she will always be the mother who sent them away, and regardless of the political necessity of her decisions first to romance Antony and then to commit suicide as a means to

preserve the best of her state, she will always be the queen who abandoned political responsibility for love. This thinking, however, ignores the reality that public and private are not so easily separated—for women or for men.

Neither Cleopatra nor Antony, then, nor really anyone today can fully separate private from public in life, in death, or in the life-after-death of public and private memory. And Sidney's translation of this play makes that fact very clear. Sidney keeps the on-stage chorus of Egyptians to comment on the action in the first three acts because the choral response shows the public effects of private actions, for Cleopatra's choices most affect her Egyptian people. Most simplistically rendered, the Egyptians will lose their country because their queen, Cleopatra, has so recklessly loved Antony. Conquering Rome will occupy Egypt. The Egyptians realize that Cleopatra's private decisions (3.423-34) will subject them to Caesar. As they see Antony disappear into Cleopatra's tomb, her people despair so greatly that Dircetus exclaims, "Greater misery / In sacked towns can hardly ever be" (4.320-21). Antony's suicide, linked with Cleopatra's death, thus becomes a matter of public memory for the both Egyptians and the Romans as well. Complicating the matter even further, Sidney shows that even within the monument, Cleopatra and Antony cannot fully gain privacy. Cleopatra knows that her women will witness her last moments and will re-tell her death, thereby producing a public memory of it, for those women help her to lift Antony and later watch her die. Yet she cannot restrict her last moments to her friends alone, for she does not have the luxury of friends or a "friends only" moment. Cleopatra is a queen. Thus, she commands her waiting women, even within the tomb, to perform a mourning ritual designed as a public

display of grief (5.132-35, 191, 195-96). Also affected by this act, the Egyptians will remember their former independence and probably escape sacking, but they cannot escape the humiliation of Roman occupation, and they will always associate Cleopatra's name with national disgrace. Indeed, both Garnier's original and Mary Sidney's translation of *The Tragedy of Antony* contribute to memories of Cleopatra as a private-public woman. Mary Sidney's decision to translate and then to publish the translation suggests that she recognizes the tensions inherent in responding to female gender expectations of maintaining privacy while ignoring the reality that circumstances and role demands can and often do force women into public life. Sidney clearly empathizes with such women: she knows that for women, the competition between private and public demands has profoundly different costs as compared to the costs for men. While men may commit suicide, literally or figuratively, in an attempt to restore their good reputations and to maintain the reputations of their families, women have no such option. Women are, in fact, blamed for their inability to navigate successfully those complex, intertwined, competing responsibilities. They are safest when they either deny their private persons entirely, much like Elizabeth Tudor who refused all suitors but whose regular menses were a state concern, or when they refuse to take up any public life at all, much like Mary Sidney pretended to do. Then, as now, women like Cleopatra and Mary Sidney frequently find themselves in positions that do not offer simple choices such as denying private life for public life or public life for private life.

Despite the way in which other storytellers make and re-make her reputation posthumously, this Cleopatra successfully blends her public and private lives, suggesting

that Sidney and other women looked to female characterizations such as this one to help them navigate the tricky waters of pretending to carry on their private roles while actively sustaining public agendas. Though both Cleopatra and Antony privilege private concerns over public ones and their choices have far-reaching consequences, it is Cleopatra who capably manages private and public, present and future, simultaneously. She is queen, lover, and mother, and she balances those triple roles despite constant convergence of and conflict between public and private duties. Simply, by producing children with Antony, she fulfills both private desire and a required public function, thus literally insuring that people will remember her. Additional major actions deserve reinterpretation: for example, her going to sea with Antony is a public duty, for she leads her ships in battle; even Antony and Lucilius assign her flight from the sea battle to civic duty (3.19-22). Certainly, Cleopatra's military leadership, much like that of Elizabeth Tudor, also publicly rejects "proper" womanly place, and for this reason attracts disapproval and provokes interpretive debates that such women could and did use to their advantage. For example, Eras asserts that Cleopatra went with Antony as his wife, not as a leader of men (2.215), and Cleopatra references Antony as "husband." By using the conflicting ways in which observers might interpret her actions, Cleopatra deftly manages public and private demands. She seemingly maintains "proper" placement within a hierarchical structure despite a collision of role expectations much like Mary Sidney who wrote primarily within the translation genre but whose translations were printed and circulated during her lifetime, and who managed the castle at Cardiff until her son's majority (Hannay, "Unpublished").

Furthermore, although Cleopatra does surrender her nation to Roman rule, she assures that the Egyptians avoid much bloodshed, thereby claiming a meaningful death in an attempt to uphold her public persona. The Roman soldiers, not the Egyptian chorus, refer to civil war and its destruction. Though Dircetus does compare the mourning of the Egyptians outside Cleopatra's tomb to the lamentation of those whose city has been sacked, Octavius' response to Antony's death suggests his fair intentions toward the Egyptians, and reveals his determination to possess at least Cleopatra's corpse and her royal treasures (4.334-41; 360-67). The Roman soldiers also recognize her virtue, claiming that the only weapons she need fear now belong to Jove, and thereby immediately contribute to her public persona and to good memories of her as a politician and queen (4.440-47). Before she dies, Cleopatra also carefully manages events after her death so that the Romans will not capture her children and force them to parade as war prizes. Preventing such physical humiliation, Cleopatra clearly demonstrates her ability to control both her public and private lives. Publicly, as heirs to her crown her children are in danger; privately, she wants her children safe. Thus, by providing for their escape, Cleopatra defends public and private interest, for if neither she nor her children are captured, the Romans cannot exult in their victory and her children do escape physical harm. Those children may, of course, return armed later so as to reclaim their mother's throne. Plainly, Cleopatra ably negotiates between public and private tensions, future concerns for her political reputation and present concern for her children's welfare.

Accordingly, Mary Sidney's translation of *The Tragedy of Antonie* clearly engages concerns about women's public and private lives. Both Cleopatra and Antony lead highly public lives, but have private responsibilities. Cleopatra is a queen, lover, and

mother; Antony, Roman husband and father, is a lover and father in Egypt. As he moves inevitably toward death, Antony chooses private desire over public duty. His future reputation, up to Sidney's era, had suffered from that choice, much like the reputations of male politicians since then whose private decisions have incurred public humiliation. Cleopatra's reputation focuses on her actions before death and her wiles used to gain a political upper hand—perhaps partly because her decision to die with her “husband” rather than face the scorn of a triumphal parade and her children's destruction aligns with gendered expectations of women's private lives, even to the point of pushing private life into public view for political ends. Cleopatra's skill at settling both public and private demands publicizes role conflict for a woman like Mary Sidney, whose private and public experiences writing herself, managing public affairs for her son, and promoting Philip Sidney's literary legacy (Hannay, “Moses”) demonstrate that women's private actions have public purposes and create public purposes with all of the attendant risks of creating and maintaining a public persona. After all, Mary Sidney's translation of *Antonie* also positions Mary unimpeachably as a public writing woman—within social norms to be sure—but with a public persona nonetheless. Sidney's *Tragedy of Antonie* reveals a deep fissure inherent in expectations that women lead private lives—although circumstances might dictate otherwise—yet possess and promote public personas. Such tensions, as Sidney highlighted by even choosing to translate a play specifically about a very public and private woman, have not vanished. Attendant guilt for any choice that seems to privilege one instead of the other has not disappeared either. They have, as Sidney's Cleopatra knew, gone viral and lived for centuries.

Notes

ⁱ For a sampling of such work consider Fiskien; Hannay, ““Your vertuous”” and ““House-confined””; and Wall.

ⁱⁱ Numerous critics have commented on this facet of Sidney’s works, including Mary Ellen Lamb, “Art of Dying” and “Myth”; and Walker. In contrast, Gary Waller suggests that *Antonie* publicizes “the Countess’ dedication to her brother’s literary ideals” (108).

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Our Debt to Mary Wollstonecraft, Moral and Intellectual Pioneer for Women

By Susan Roberts

I teach a course entitled Leadership in Writing at the United States Coast Guard Academy that includes both male and female Officer Candidates. The women in my class are strong and unafraid to accept challenges. They perform jobs often seen as men's work, live by the Coast Guard's Core Values of Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty, and balance their time between being on active duty and being wife, mother, or both. In our classes, we focus on examples of leadership in the military and civilian world.

To mark Women's History Month in March, I asked each Officer Candidate (OC) to select a female who exemplifies leadership and to present a speech about her. Their choices included Hillary Rodham Clinton, Sarah Palin, Margaret Thatcher, Queen Boudicca, Cleopatra, Elizabeth I, Sally Ride, Amelia Earhart, Rosa Parks, Susan B. Anthony, Mother Teresa, and Marie Curie. I responded by noting, "I see no one has claimed Mary Wollstonecraft." A few moments of silence were followed by a series of questions: "Who is she?" "Is she in politics?" "Is she a writer?" "Why did you expect us to know her name?" and "Did she have anything to do with the Coast Guard?" I responded, "She was an eighteenth century writer. Women today owe her a debt of gratitude for we are beneficiaries of her ideas, which were quite revolutionary for her times. She advocated moral and intellectual education for women in a world where a woman's voice rarely counted." One of the handful of female OCs in class was curious enough to claim Wollstonecraft as the figure for her

leadership speech, and all of the students were introduced to the life of this woman, the social changes she called for over two hundred years ago, and the impact of her work on opportunities for women then and now.

Biographical Overview

Born in England in April of 1759, Mary Wollstonecraft was the second child of a family of seven. Her early years were challenging as her father spent the family fortune on drink instead of his family and her mother favored the oldest son. Ever resourceful as a child and young woman, Wollstonecraft ventured to open a school in 1784. By 1787, she found herself working as editorial assistant to publisher Joseph Johnson in London. Through her work, she associated with some of the famous thinkers, writers, and political commentators of the day including Tom Paine, William Blake, and William Godwin. Developing both writing and editorial talents by 1789, "... Wollstonecraft was established as a translator, reviewer, and minor author ..." (Todd 7).

Haunted by her childhood experiences, Wollstonecraft fought social and moral conventions grounded in male privilege at the expense of women and children. She was headstrong and filled with determination and her own opinions, which she boldly expressed in speech and writing. She advocated moral upbringing for women but engaged in a long-term and tumultuous affair with Gilbert Imlay, an American with whom she parented daughter Fanny in May 1794. When Imlay ended the relationship, Wollstonecraft unsuccessfully attempted suicide, and she was left alone to provide for herself and her child. As Janet M. Todd noted, "Clearly

Wollstonecraft came to her ideas on women's sorry situation from her own experiences as a dependent and independent woman" (9). Attracted to William Godwin, she became pregnant with his child and married him. Wollstonecraft found an intellectual equal in Godwin, and their relationship gave her freedom and stability that had eluded her for so long. After the birth of Mary, her second daughter, Wollstonecraft developed an infection due to complications with the delivery, and she died a few days later.

Active as a writer even while becoming a mother, Wollstonecraft authored a work entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) that brought her attention as one of the eighteenth century's leading feminists, and her ideas began to have had a far reaching impact on the moral and educational development of women.

Her Stances on Women's Education and Virtue

Wollstonecraft emphasized the value of education for women, but she called for something more than opportunities to learn needlework and social graces. She stressed that a woman's education should shape body, mind, and emotions, eventually leading to a sense of independence. Although Wollstonecraft's thinking was ahead of her time, it reflected philosophies of the Enlightenment, which championed the power of education, social reform, and moral worth and development as the right of individuals including women.

Wollstonecraft designed *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* expressly as a retaliatory response to philosopher Edmund Burke and what she considered his masculine folly. She rallied to defend Richard Price, her ally and benefactor, from the

sharp-tongued attack of Burke; as a result, she leveled harsh criticism against those practices and principles that blatantly discriminated against women. Throughout her work she consistently emphasized her main thesis: Education was necessary for women, and through moral education women would acquire virtue, knowledge and honesty.

For Wollstonecraft, lack of education was the cause of all feminine misery, and since women were denied the opportunity to expand their mental activities in many cases, they could never attain virtue. Thus, they assumed artificial codes of behavior to gain some type of masculine respect and were content to remain ignorant to attract men who would profess love for them. However, women could never remain objects of desire for indefinite periods of time, and even though they sacrificed their youth and middle age to husband and family, women were always restrained by the masculine notion of “the desire of being always women ... [which was] the very consciousness that degrades the sex” (Wollstonecraft 156).

The author sought to partially remedy these problems through the establishment of an educational system of day schools designed to strengthen the fiber of mind, body and heart. As a combination of public and private schools, these new centers of learning would be co-educational and provide women with accessibility not only to an education but also to a virtuous status. Inevitably then, as the author hoped, the myth of masculine superiority would be destroyed at least on an intellectual level, since she admitted that no one could deny men’s physical strength as a natural characteristic.

Once women received this ideal education of mind, body and heart, they could assert their rights and seek legal and political participation instead of cultivating vanity and indolent behavior designed to please men. Wollstonecraft found women to be lazy and thought that laziness would continue to be a female characteristic unless both mental and bodily moral stamina were required of them. She believed that a sound moral education could enlarge the mind. As a result, feminine blind obedience would cease, and women would no longer be veiled in ignorance under the guise of innocence.

Wollstonecraft's idea of virtue was a composite of goodness, justice, respect, honesty and chastity. Furthermore, she advised the female sex to cultivate modesty and reserve, for women could not remain complacent to be mere objects of pleasure with many vices and follies. Instead, she envisioned that women should reach their full potential through intellectual self-improvement, not embellishments designed to make them physically pleasing to men.

Society could not expect virtuous women unless independence from men became a reality. In Wollstonecraft's mind, without a more equitable system of rights, masculine ignorance and pride would further undermine society. Until women could shed their feminine weakness and learn to develop moral virtues, they would find themselves victims of masculine contempt. Wollstonecraft affirmed that as women became strong willed and morally educated in virtuous behavior, they would earn their equality to men as human creatures and understand that they were "... placed on this earth to unfold their faculties" (Wollstonecraft 32).

Enlightened Ideals

Mary Wollstonecraft became a daughter of the Age of Enlightenment as she sought to apply the discipline of ethics and morality to educational and social affairs for women. She drew on rationalism and Newton's idea of an ordered physical world, a world where women could and would have a role, and incorporated ideas from Locke and Hume into her writings. With an emphasis on the mind, where "inner worlds of thought and emotion could be applied to the social sphere as well" (Berlin 27), she saw connections between learning and self-improvement that went far beyond the educational opportunities available to females in the eighteenth century. Locke influenced her work more than the other philosophers and intellectuals, and "although John Locke did not write specifically about the education of girls, many of Mary's ideas paralleled his" (Flexner 59). Both Locke and Wollstonecraft shared a concern for children's diet and health; both opposed any attempt to impede children's interest or curiosity; and both affirmed good character development through intellectual discussion.

Building on her familiarity with Locke's work, Wollstonecraft expanded her knowledge through experiences such as journeying to France to study the philosophies behind and witness effects of the French Revolution. She concluded that the French Revolution was "... the natural outcome of intellectual development in Europe and a sign of genuine social improvement" (Todd 11-12). While in France, she immersed herself in Voltaire's works, for as a writer he looked to explain man and nature in a new rational light, without superstition or theological dogma.

Returning to England and continuing her quest for knowledge, Wollstonecraft discovered writings by Richard Price who influenced her moral philosophy and concern for conscience. As a preacher, theologian, and philosopher, he advocated a humanitarianism that was quite liberal for the times. Price assisted Wollstonecraft throughout her life, and he was, in fact, a father figure who shared his liberal philosophies with her. Unafraid to speak out on social issues, Price condemned poverty, misery, the lack of educational and career opportunities for females, and the limited future defined for women by men. Heeding the ideas of Locke and Price, Wollstonecraft saw "... that mind and faith go together and enlighten each other" (Flexner 145). Furthermore, she realized "... that reason, no less than faith, comes from God and that they do not conflict" (Flexner 145). Wollstonecraft wanted opportunities for women that would ensure them a real education and preparation for pursuing careers outside the home. She recognized that education of mind and morals would not necessarily improve women's place in society, emancipate them or provide them career opportunities. However, Wollstonecraft felt that changes in women's educational opportunities could become catalysts for society to be reconstructed in ways that would allow women to be full participants in new social settings based on equality and humanitarian concerns.

Progressive and astute in her ideas about family relationships, she realized that parental authority could either destroy or engender children's attitudes and the scope of their mental accomplishments. Thus, she emphasized the important roles that parents as well as educational systems play in fulfilling society's obligations for

instructing offspring—both males and females—in moral behavior and correct principles of ethics.

Wollstonecraft was a firm believer that education of women's intellect would provide a conduit for their moral education as well and ultimately produce sensible and ethical if not ideal citizens, wives and mothers. Her male critics countered with the argument that formal schooling for women could lead to domestic incompetence, but Wollstonecraft was wise enough to recognize this criticism as yet another tactic designed to perpetuate and perpetuate the idea of feminine weakness. Wollstonecraft insisted that the ideal woman must be the essence of goodness in virtue, truth, justice, education, chastity and rights, yet this ideal woman, even by today's standards, was a very utopian creation. Her high standards for women might have been based on very personal conceptions of feminine life and character. Ironically, this ideal image is one that Mary Wollstonecraft herself could not attain.

Wollstonecraft's relationships with Imlay and Godwin appeared to contradict her own somewhat Puritanical standards, but they and other personal experiences made her feel that she knew what other women needed and solidified conceptions of virtue and chastity that she sought to impose on society at large. Having found a circle of friends and literary acquaintances that advanced her intellectual and moral development, Wollstonecraft expected other women to seek out experiences that would improve their education, moral development and lots in life and, further, lead them to challenge traditional masculine-feminine relations. In her mind, members of both sexes were fully capable of destroying or improving each other. This premise

prompted Wollstonecraft to call for a “revolution in female manners ... to make them as a part of the human species... reinforcing themselves to reform the world” (Flexner 145).

Position as a Vanguard for Women’s Rights

Wollstonecraft was ahead of her times with her advocacy for governmental representation that included women and her suggestion that women should enter business enterprises and professions that were masculine territory at the time. Wollstonecraft’s work, written more than two hundred years ago, is relevant today. Today’s women embody many of the rigorous standards Wollstonecraft envisioned. Females at the Coast Guard Academy have much in common with Mary Wollstonecraft. Like her, they are unafraid of life’s challenges, and they are women of character who advocate for and put social change into action. Female OCs adhere to the Coast Guard’s Core Values; they seek truth and justice; they are educated and will further their education while in the military; most importantly, though, they are involved in careers outside the home and family sphere. They have earned a place alongside men because of their physical stamina, determination, pursuit of excellence, dedication to duty, courage, valor, achievement, competitive spirit, humanitarianism and resilience.

As representatives of modern women, female OCs in the Coast Guard have achieved many of the goals Wollstonecraft advocated. In particular, Wollstonecraft would be pleased and moved that the Coast Guard, although a military service focusing on humanitarian missions, expects its members—both male and female—

to adhere to a formalized concept of morals and values. In *Character in Action, The U.S. Coast Guard on Leadership*, authors Donald T. Phillips and Admiral James M. Loy (Ret.) stress that the Coast Guard mandates a specific set of values:

The noble cause, a different kind of military, small decentralized teams, heritage and tradition, and the seas are all well woven into the fabric of the United States Coast Guard. Equal to these, however, and perhaps even more ingrained into the culture are the core values of *Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty*. These three tenets govern behavior and conduct, are part of every individual's performance evaluation, and may not be turned off after work. They are about more than just being in the Coast Guard. Every person is expected to abide by the core values all the time, as a way of life. There are no exceptions. (12)

The Coast Guard's focus on service to others, values and proper conduct would satisfy Mary Wollstonecraft's call for these traits in her expectations for females and males alike. Over more than 200 years, generations have witnessed societal and cultural revolutions that have fulfilled many of Wollstonecraft's goals and propelled women into the mainstream of the military, government, religion, education, business, medicine and law. These changes have carried forward the philosophy behind *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and its emphasis on moral and intellectual education for women as mechanisms for improving the lives of women and men. The future that Wollstonecraft envisioned assures her a prominent place in the history of the feminist movement and in the circle of feminist philosophers. All women should know Mary Wollstonecraft's name and her contributions to society because we owe her a debt of gratitude for changes in many

parts of our world that allow women's voices to be heard and that allot women rights and opportunities to fulfill their intellectual and moral potentials as human beings.

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Women Who Make a Difference in the Lives of Children

By Connie Mietlicki

Critical issues facing women and all parents in our nation and others stem from two facts: 1) Many, if not most, parents must depend on other people to care for their children while they work, and 2) Many childcare providers lack adequate training. The professional education of childcare workers or lack of it impacts learning outcomes for children every day. In 2001, as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (2003), 66% of all 4-year-olds were enrolled in a center or school-based preschool program, a statistic that represents a dramatic 23% increase from thirty years earlier (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970). Today, preschool enrollment varies widely from state to state, with Oklahoma the highest at 71% (Barnett, et al., 2010). Short, on-the-job-only training typifies the average provider's early childhood educational preparation. Some do not even have high school diplomas or Graduate Equivalent Degrees (GEDs), which justifies the low wages paid by employers. Little education and low incomes for staff, high rates of teacher turnover, and high child-to-adult ratios characterize poor quality childcare in the United States (De Vita, Twombly & Montilla, 2002).

Research evidence indicates that academic outcomes and cognitive development for young children can be improved by good quality care in center-based programs (Barnet, 1995; Meyers et al., 2003; Smolensky & Gootman, 2003). Early in life, responsive and cognitively stimulating care fosters the language and cognitive skills that facilitate learning (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Children from economically disadvantaged families are less likely to attend quality preschool programs and more

likely to enter school with fewer academic skills than their more advantaged peers, contributing to substantial gaps in cognitive and academic competencies that persist in later school years (Stipek & Ryan, 1997).

Results from a large body of studies confirm that teacher qualifications play a pivotal role in equipping children with skills necessary to enter school ready to learn (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Lazar, Darlington, Murray, Royce, & Snipper, 1982; Oden, Schweinhart, & Weikart, 2000; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2000; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999; Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001). Additionally, higher qualifications for caregivers contribute to more positive short- and long-term outcomes for the children in their charge (Kontos & Wilcox-Herzog, 1997, 2001; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989), and level of teacher education are related to the quality of child care and instruction they provide (Berk, 1985; Dunn, 1993; Helburn, 1995; Honig & Hirallal, 1998; Marshall et al., 2001; Ruopp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1990). These studies strongly indicate that a bachelor's degree and specialized early childhood education training at the college level are required to support high-quality child care (Blau, 2000; Howes, 1997; Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2000; Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997; Whitebook, 2001).

To promote higher quality teacher preparation and care for preschool children, the Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA) developed a career lattice which allows early childhood providers to obtain on-the-job training and access to higher education. At its inception in 1992, the TECTA system represented a new paradigm for the early childhood profession that promoted upward mobility with increased

compensation for each step of professional development, and it included alternative pathways with various entry points. TECTA's Orientation was designed to be a gateway to academic training, and classes introduce providers to best practices in 1) Center-Based Education, 2) Family Care Settings, 3) Programs for School-Age Children, 4) Infant/Toddler Programs, and 5) Childcare Administration. Upon completion of Orientation courses, students may be eligible for financial aid to pursue early childhood credentials, such as the Child Development Associate (CDA), or seek degrees from accredited institutions of higher education.

The TECTA lattice allows childcare providers to take classes in a coordinated statewide system of two-year and four-year institutions and earn post-secondary certificates and enter degree programs when they meet admission requirements. Personal accounts from four women who climbed the lattice illustrate how professional development and academic study changed their lives and the lives of children and families with whom they have worked. First, meet Melissa and then Brenda, Claudia, and Kelly to learn about their paths through this career lattice.

Melissa's Story—“It was a step-by-step, moving-up process.”

Working as an assistant teacher in an after-school program to earn money while taking college courses toward a pre-medical degree, Melissa realized that her true passion was teaching children. She graduated with a baccalaureate degree in biology but did not pursue a career in medicine. When she learned that a local academy had added a pre-school program, she interviewed and got a job working with infants and toddlers. Melissa related, “I had no child development training except for my five years' work experience” in the after-school program.



After being hired, Melissa took the Infant/Toddler Orientation. She confessed that she was “amazed by how much I didn’t know even with five years’ experience. Just because you work in childcare, it doesn’t mean that you know what child development really is until you actually take the courses.” She then learned she could take courses for a CDA credential. “I started the Healthy Learning course including the mentoring requirement.” As she completed childcare courses, Melissa was promoted from teacher to coordinator for the Infant/Toddler program. “By increasing my knowledge and confidence, I began the moving-up process.”

When the CDA was earned, Melissa then obtained a two-year Associate’s degree in early childhood education. “That achievement moved me into the assistant director position. After I achieved that goal, I stayed two years and became director of a before- and after-school program where I stayed for almost two years, another step in the moving-up process.” Melissa took School-Age Orientation with her staff. Then she took Administrator Orientation “because it was important in the development of the center. Regardless of degree, I realized I needed more specific information about areas pertaining to my job so I became a life-long learner.”

Melissa worked in all areas of early childhood education, taking more courses at each phase of her “moving up process” from assistant to lead teacher and then to coordinator, assistant director, and director. She described her progress as “building on successes as I learned more and more.” She explained, “The more I know, the more I can teach.” Melissa concluded, “My ultimate goal is to be an advocate for children and their families, sharing my knowledge of childcare, and improving the quality of care that the children are receiving each step of the way.”

Brenda’s Story—“One course changed my life.”

“I was mediocre in high school but got my diploma and started working in childcare. My director saw my potential and encouraged me to take classes. She took the classes with me, which was helpful. Health and Safety was my first college course.” Brenda continued, “I took Center-Based Orientation later on. I was new; I had no experience in teaching except for Sunday school. I wanted to apply everything I learned when I saw what a difference it could make in the classroom. What I learned sparked my interest, especially the diversity module.” After attending this session, Brenda “wanted to make sure the classroom was a place where all the children felt they belonged” so she brought appropriate materials to school “that reflected all cultures” represented by the children.



Brenda’s “come-from-behind” story is one that offers encouragement for others: “When I started taking classes, I was apprehensive. I just got by in school. I was worried I wouldn’t do well, but then I saw that what we were learning related to my job and would help me at work. I learned that persistence paid off and was successful in the college courses, which was good for my self-esteem and basically changed everything for me.” Brenda originally planned only to get her CDA credential and never expected to get a college degree. “When I saw I could be successful, I just kept on going and went back for my Associate’s degree when I was almost 32 and had two children.” She graduated Magna Cum Laude and was recognized as a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and Early Childhood Education Student of the Year. She went on for her Baccalaureate degree and has now finished her Master’s degree in early literacy. Today Brenda is convinced that “One course changed my life.”

Brenda’s career growth spilled over to her home life. Academic work for degrees in early childhood education “made me a better mother, and the confidence I gained has impacted my family. My children now know that college is an option for them. My daughter is pursuing a degree in biology. She and my son saw me up late at night

studying so I could become the first person in my family to earn a college degree. With each degree, I got a salary increase, which made financial changes that helped my family. Now, I am a positive role model.”

Today Brenda is a community leader with positions on key boards in the Chattanooga area. “Providers see me as a real person. I tell them, ‘If I can do it, you can.’” Brenda has seen many programs improve the quality of care for children. “We go through rating scales with providers to help them make improvements such as arranging rooms and centers and going through toys to discard those that are inappropriate. Our work helps create accredited providers who are changing things for the better in Tennessee childcare.”

Claudia’s story—“I had the power of support from others.”

When a post card arrived in the mail advertising “FREE hours” of credit for childcare providers, Claudia, the director of a center for young children, decided to take advantage of the offer. “I needed the hours to meet a licensing requirement,” so Claudia and four teachers from her center took Center-Based Orientation together. “From the very first class, we realized we had work to do in our center. After each module, we realized weaknesses in the program and were excited to incorporate our new learning into our setting. The changes we made in the curriculum got kids more involved, and our classrooms ran smoother. It was a real eye-opener. The kids enjoyed their experiences and were more engaged in activities. They learned and interacted more because we were able to provide more interesting areas. Even the parents could see the changes.”



After that, Claudia attended courses for the Administrator Orientation. Her administrative skills contributed to staff development and systematic plans to improve the center. Through that process, she became aware of her own strengths personally and professionally. Claudia's story is one that illustrates the power of support. After the Orientations, she and the group of caregivers from her center began to take early childhood classes. "When we were tired, we motivated each other. We implemented at the center what we learned and then taught it to the other staff." Claudia attributed her success to colleagues, "I had the power of support from others."

Claudia took another three academic classes and "gained insight into how children develop language, math, and science skills, which helped me to teach with confidence." Claudia completed her Associate's degree with honors, an accomplishment that "seemed like it took forever, but it was a big milestone in my life." Claudia stated, "I proved a point. It doesn't matter how old you are, or how long it takes, or even if English is your second language, as long as you are motivated and put in the time and effort, you can complete your goal if you have your mind set. 'The most difficult step of any journey is the first.' This is the quote I live by." Claudia has the words in her quote engraved on a plaque, and she takes them to the Orientation classes she now teaches to inspire her

students. Having completed her Bachelor's degree, Claudia has started on her Master's. Through each phase of her professional development, Claudia has learned that “the more educated you become, the stronger a leader you are.”

Kelly's Story—“I was hungry for knowledge.”

Like Claudia, Kelly was a center director when the advertisement for free training caught her attention. The hours required for continued licensing had increased so “I drove one way, one hour, for five Saturdays” to take the Center-Based Orientation. She reported, “I was able to implement the knowledge in the classrooms at the center right away. The Orientation had such an impact that I required every employee of my center to take it.” At that time, she had nine employees. Hungry for more knowledge, Kelly then took the Administrator Orientation, “which gave helpful hints for the management portion of my job.”



As the co-director of a licensed childcare facility, Kelly needed training credit each year. She chose the free training because it would “not only serve as training hours, but also count toward a degree that would last forever.” Her first step was to complete her CDA

credential. “The coursework explained the whys for how you do things. I was hungry for knowledge. I could not get enough information quickly enough, so gradually I increased my hourly load each semester and before I knew it, I had completed all my course work for my Associate’s degree.” She recalled, “I really enjoyed the college courses and soaked in all of the knowledge being offered. I decided I was going to be the first generation college graduate in my family with a four-year degree. The on-line courses entwined with campus courses were perfect for me. In two short years, I obtained my four-year degree.” Not stopping there, Kelly went on to finish her Master’s degree in Family and Consumer Science and currently is an instructor for early childhood and Orientation courses and a CDA advisor.

Kelly’s story highlights the effect of her thirst for knowledge on children and others. As a director, she saw a real difference in her staff’s interactions with children after they had experienced Orientation training. She noted improvements in “appropriate setting up of the classroom and talking to parents.” Kelly added, “The teachers loved going to classes. There was a positive influence from them on the children even after the first session.” Kelly has first-hand knowledge that there was higher quality care for children because of the training they all received. “I have seen teachers move through courses and then seen their impact in the classrooms. Ultimately, children benefit because the teacher puts it together for better flow.”

Kelly concluded, “I was traveling down a path looking to provide quality child care for the children in my community. Now I am able to share my success story with many other women who are interested in growing professionally.” Still hungry for

knowledge, Kelly is now enrolled in a doctoral program and seeking the highest credential in her field!

A Common Thread from All Four Stories—Care is the key.

Real stories of authentic experiences are inspiring sources of information, especially for people in similar circumstances. Professional development for these women has indeed had a profound impact on the quality of care in early childhood all across the state. Through such training, they have been able to move up in the workplace, often with pay increases and career advancements. They found the instruction immediately applicable and relevant to their every day work experiences. They gained self-respect and confidence, which, in turn, motivated them to continue taking courses, moving up, and learning more. As they grew professionally, they improved their centers or daycare sites. In many cases, they sought accreditation and/or improved scores on the state quality rating system for childcare programs. Ultimately, their children received better care, and the parents and communities responded with praise and approval. They have joined advisory boards and committees and become members of professional organizations, affecting policy changes at local, state, and national levels. Because of the increasing need for highly qualified professionals in early childhood settings, they could pursue educational goals with confidence that there would be a place for them to work when they obtained that next degree or credential. All along the way, they made life-long friendships with colleagues and fellow childcare providers, who helped and encouraged them. Their real stories are living proof that women who seek to grow professionally can make a difference, both in their own lives and in lives of the people for whom they care.

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Author's Note

The TECTA Program is sponsored and funded by the Tennessee Department of Human Services and is approved by the Tennessee Department of Human Services and the Tennessee Board of Regents. The TECTA Program is managed by Tennessee State University Center of Excellence for Learning Sciences.

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Professional Conversations on “What Not To Wear” and Other Essential Advice for
Female Pre-service Teachers

By Shelly Hudson Bowden, Tracye Strichik, Carolyn Corliss, and Ronnie Griffon

One of the missions embraced by members of WILLA is to improve quality of teaching in English language arts by increasing awareness of status and images of women in the profession. For those of us mentoring groups of pre-service teachers who are predominately females, attempts to reach that goal are often thwarted by our students' limited understanding of the gap they must bridge to move from being who they are now to becoming professional educators. And as their instructors and supervisors for public school field placements and internships, we find it difficult to confront issues related to attire and demeanor that compromise the professional status of many young women preparing to be teachers. One of the authors of this article, for example, observed an intern doing a read-aloud in a child-sized chair with 22 kindergartners gathered around on the floor. The intern sported a skirt so short that both Shelly, the supervisor, and the children had more trouble paying attention to the story, effectiveness of its delivery, and instructional efforts and outcomes than to the color and style of the underwear she wore! Shelly was then confronted with the awkward task of discussing the image presented by this young woman in follow-up conversations for feedback and evaluation.

To head off situations such as the one encountered by Shelly with this intern, we examined the most common problems presented by female pre-service teachers and our successes and failures helping them become aware of the importance of the images they project at school and in the classroom. Based on our experiences, we realized that taking a tongue-in-cheek, humorous tact was more productive than a confrontational approach to

dealing with these issues. To do so, we adopted a format popularized on late night television by David Letterman who features the top ten examples representing a topic or type of event, starting with number ten, which is most obvious and somewhat amusing, and ending with number one, which is last because it is less obvious but deemed most likely to make the audience laugh. Unlike Letterman's list, our Top Ten Professional Tips are all equally salient; however, we have concluded our list with the item determined by us to be the most important, number one, set of points for female students to consider as they embark on their roles as professionals. As university faculty and classroom teachers, we have had to address all the behaviors and concerns that appear in our list, and we offer the tips we share with female pre-service teachers to other educators as a springboard for conversations about professional images with the women they instruct and supervise.

We begin our conversations about professionalism with a statement based on advice from Rike and Sharp (2008) to students aspiring to be teachers. They recommend that pre-service teachers start preparations for the position by realizing all they say, do, and wear (and how they say, do, and wear it) will be reflected in others' (including college and classroom teachers and supervisors, children and their parents, administrators, and future employers) visions of their roles and competencies as teachers. We also explain that the list that follows is not exhaustive but is merely a starting point for continuing discussions about the impact of image on one's status as a professional educator.

Top Ten Professional Tips for Female Pre-service Teachers

10-Attendance. If you do not show up for work, you have no opportunity to present a professional image and convince anyone that you can be an effective teacher! Get more

than one alarm clock for insurance that you will wake up on time. Leave earlier than you should need to so you can be punctual and have time to get prepared for instruction even if you are caught in traffic or stopped and ticketed for exceeding the speed limit on the way to school. Avoid no shows of all kinds, for all reasons, and at all costs.

9-Speech habits. You may have been taken in by movies with females who use Valley Girl speech in which the word “like” is repeatedly inserted in conversations between and in sentences where “like” is not needed. As you practice your teaching, tape record and listen to yourself to hear and note quantities of repeated words such as “like,” “okay,” and “alright” that interfere with coherent and articulate communication.

8-Professional attire. You are required to follow dress code policies established by each of the public schools in which you are placed for field experiences or internships. However, advertising used to sell women’s fashions has generated terms to entice you to buy and wear particular brands and styles of clothing. Victoria’s Secret, for instance, offers “juicy” items designed and marketed to appeal to you as a consumer and to make you appealing to onlookers. Additionally, pajama pants may indeed be “oh so comfortable,” but the classroom is not an appropriate place to wear sleeping and lounging attire, which is the exception and not the rule in most schools. Many schools do allow casual clothing such as jeans and t-shirts for special days or events. If so, make sure shirts promote the school (Hillcrest Middle School for example) or school sanctioned organizations and activities and do not display graphics that may be offensive to children, parents, and co-workers. Good rules of thumb are to dress each day as if you are in the school for a job interview and to be cautious about dressing casually even if given permission.

7-Exposure of body parts. Your neck, arms, and legs below the knees are generally the only body parts except the head that are safe to bare when working in a school setting. “Bend and snap” is a phrase for movements in a scene from the movie “Legally Blonde,” in which a woman bends down and then quickly snaps back up after exposing her breasts. Low-cut tops worn in the classroom create opportunities for too much fall out while leaning over to assist or monitor the work of children. Be sure to wear blouses and dresses that allow you to avoid bending and snapping. In addition, bare midriffs and body parts between the midriff and knees are often problems due to shirts that are not long enough, pants with waistbands that are not high enough, and skirts that are too short. Select clothes cut to eliminate exposure of body parts that will be seen as inappropriate for viewing at school.

6-Jewelry, piercings, and tattoos. In a segment of “Sabrina, the Teenage Witch,” the star informed a young man that his array of jewelry studded piercings was over the top by saying, “You look like you fell head first into a tackle box!” Before teaching, it is prudent to remove eyebrow and nose rings. Tattoos are another adornment that you may not want to display when teaching. Many school policies allow only one piercing and piece of jewelry in each ear, and some prohibit tattoos in plain view. Failure to abide by policies such as these can result in being asked to leave the classroom.

5-Foot safety. Just because you can wear flip-flops and sandals to school does not mean that it is a good idea. Consider leaving both at home when reporting for work at school. As a teacher in kindergarten, Ronnie, who is also one of our authors, warned interns and practicum students that even the littlest of feet in small-sized tennis shoes can hurt and do serious damage to unshod toes on much bigger feet! Additionally, children’s safety as

well as your own must be considered when you select footwear for school. Spiked heels, for example, can be dangerous to adults and children moving in close quarters around classrooms and along hallways. Find shoes that protect you and the youngsters with whom you work!

4-Communication and confidentiality. The majority of educators are female. And, when women get together, talk can turn to gossip (Tannen, 1991). As a teacher, talking with colleagues, supervisors, administrators, parents, and students is necessary, but talking about any of these individuals is inappropriate and potentially a breach of confidentiality. Do what you need to do in the teachers' lounge or workroom, then leave to avoid sharing information that need not be disclosed. Exercise caution and ask for advice and help when communicating concerns about anything you experience or observe at school.

3- Social networks and students. Networking sites are a great way to stay connected with friends and family, but students in your classroom and their parents also may participate in networks and access sites where you post. If so, these activities are potentially harmful to your professional image and your teaching career. Janel, for example, encountered problems with social networking during her internship. One of her sixth grade students asked her to "friend" him on-line. She accepted the invitation and began communicating with him electronically. When the child's parents found out about her interactions with their son on the social network, they complained to Janel's principal and requested that these communications be terminated. The principal asked Janel not only to "unfriend" the student but also to discontinue her internship at that school.

2- Social networks and pictures. Some pictures may indeed be worth a thousand words, and you may not be able to afford the impact on your professional image that those words are worth. Many of our pre-service teachers post photos of themselves and others on their social network pages that include shots of them wearing non-professional clothing and engaging in activities such as drinking and engaging in behaviors that test the moral codes of others. The following is an example of a picture that may prove detrimental to the professional images of the pre-service teachers enjoying this party. Our example picture has faces that have been blurred to protect the identity of the subjects. Blurring may be something to consider if you place an image like this on your social network site, but that defeats the purpose for posting the picture.



If your pages and photos are not restricted and available only to friends you trust not to take offense at what they see, they can be accessed by any audience which may include students and their parents, teaching colleagues, and potential employers.

1-Responsible action and self-evaluation. The nine tips for female pre-service teachers listed above are all significant considerations when developing your professional image as an educator. However, the ability to take responsibility for your actions and engage in self-evaluation is the number one, most important factor that will shape your professional

image and status as a teacher. Try the Goldilocks test: Is your professionalism and the image you project too little, too much, or just right? Yes, you do have rights in determining what constitutes the professional image you want to project, but you also need to own up to responsibility in your role as a woman and educator. Take a look around and self-evaluate the actions and images you present on all fronts. As you do, selectively and carefully mirror the behaviors and images not only of peers with whom you interact on the college campus but also of teachers you respect as competent, committed professionals and mentors in the schools. Responsible action based on continuous self-evaluation will help you become a teacher and mentor for children your classroom. According to Baldwin, “Children may not be very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them” (“Baldwin,” (N. d.), “BrainyQuote.com”).

As university faculty and classroom teachers, we offer the tips we share with female pre-service teachers to other educators as a springboard for conversations about professional images with the women they instruct and supervise.

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Narrative Reflexivity in Raced and Gendered Spaces

By Terri L. Rodriguez

This article explores the reflexive narrative positioning in which I engage as a White woman, a secondary English teacher, and an educational researcher inquiring into the experiences of Latino/a teacher candidates in a Midwestern teacher education program. As a narrative inquirer, I believe that the research journey is a collaborative and self-reflective process. Inquiry into the professional experiences, beliefs and identities of preservice teachers compels me to also excavate the ways that dominant ideologies, assumptions, and beliefs permeate my work. I argue that critically reflexive narrative positioning enables me to embrace a stance toward equity and social justice for linguistically, racially, and ethnically diverse students in U.S. public schools. My aim is to engage those who teach and conduct research for equitable purposes to partake in similar work – to examine how they have been socially and historically positioned to do such work, and what this brings to one’s teaching or research, particularly for White educators and researchers, but also regardless of one’s race or ethnicity.

In this article, I share three narrative vignettes through which I position myself in relation to the Latino/a preservice teachers with whom I collaborated in the research project. Although I believe that narrative construction is itself an interpretive and reflective process, I distinguish between narration and reflection within each vignette through the use of italics to emphasize how each story is re-visited. First, I share a story entitled “Gringa: Teaching English in Puerto Rico” in which I considered my motives for pursuing research into the cultural resources Latino/a preservice teachers bring to their

teaching. I wondered why I was interested in this work and how I might conceptualize “culture” in a way that would help me better understand how it is made visible and enacted in one’s teaching practice. I came to be a *gringa* teaching English in Puerto Rico when my husband, a native of Puerto Rico and a U.S. service member, was stationed there. In the narrative, I position myself as an ally to Spanish-speaking colleagues and students and seek to understand how political and historical contexts shape my teaching practices.

Gringa: Teaching English in Puerto Rico

I was the only *gringa* teaching at San Juan Christian Schoolⁱⁱ, one of several private K-12 English language schools located in Las Flores, Puerto Rico, a town known for its majestic and rugged beauty where black volcanic cliffs jut majestically out into the Caribbean. A two hour drive around the tip of the island to the north and east brings you to the bustle of San Juan, with its never-ending flow of tourists who come pouring out of cruise ships to shop, eat, and play. Few hotels crowd Las Flores’ pristine and isolated beaches, though, and it is easy to imagine what it must have looked like to Columbus and his men, until you notice the chain link fence edging the top of the cliff at the boundary of the U.S. Coast Guard base. *My admiration of the coastline’s pristine beaches reveals a naïve and romantic dominant narrative about the discovery and conquest of the Americas that I carry within me. I purposefully engage irony by contrasting this colonial ideology with my emerging awareness of Puerto Rico’s conflicted status as a commonwealth of the U.S. The chain link fence is both a figurative and physical boundary that preserves the island as a military outpost behind the curtain of a tourist economy.*

At San Juan Christian School, the official language of instruction is English, but most students and teachers are native Spanish speakers. Here, English and Spanish mix and mingle unabashedly in classrooms, in casual conversations on corridor balconies, in parent-teacher conferences, in faculty meetings, in school assemblies, and in the morning faculty lounge prayer ritual. I, however, am not fluent in Spanish, and I often struggled to understand the conversations going on around me. I pretended to laugh at jokes whose punch lines didn't quite make sense to me and smiled and nodded at all the right times. I felt like I stood out in many ways, from the way I dressed (*casual khakis and cotton tops*) to my hair (*which was constantly windblown and slightly frizzy*). My softly southern-accented English (*from having lived in Georgia and Kentucky for eight years*) marked me as an outsider as well.

The other *gringo* in the building was the director, a White man who represented the school for the Southern Baptist Convention in the U.S. whose mission partly funded it. *I see this now as another colonial legacy -- the historic and continuing imposition of missionaries upon the island.* Although he had lived in Puerto Rico for at least 10 years and made great pains to begin every address to the school in halted, broken Spanish, he inevitably switched over to English after the obligatory opening comments, always encouraging light-hearted laughter at his ineptitude with the language. *I wondered why this was acceptable -- and funny -- every time?*

Like the director, and lucky for me, I was dominant in the "right" language, English. In all of my interviews for an English teaching position in Puerto Rico, it was clear that my native-English-speaking ability was my biggest attribute; it didn't seem to matter that I had a master's degree in secondary English education and six years of

teaching experience, or that I wasn't bilingual, even in a commonwealth where bilingualism is the official policy. *I occupied a privileged position, but I eventually became aware of the negative connotations associated with the label for my identity. Literally, "gringa" means "White woman/girl," but in Puerto Rico, as in most of Latin America, it is a word loaded with the social and political connotations of colonization, discrimination, and oppression* (Nieto, 1998).

At San Juan Christian School, I wondered how my racial, cultural, and linguistic identities influenced classroom interactions and the ways that I taught English to Puerto Rican children as I gradually came to see my teaching practices as "different" from those of the teachers around me. While the students were *bien educado*, or well-behaved, and did not question me, I thought my teaching style was too impersonal, too time-on-task oriented, and even individualistic and competitive. I had just come from teaching in a public high school in Kentucky, where rules were posted; behavior contracts were often negotiated with "problem" students; assigning detention was the norm; and my value as a teacher was measured through student time-on-task and scores on the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). At San Juan, I was addressed as "professora," students never talked back, and they always turned in their homework. *My previous teaching experiences had not prepared me for what I felt here. When I began my teaching career in a predominantly Black high school in Georgia, I was told that as a White, female teacher from up North, I would have to earn the respect of my students. In Puerto Rico, respect is not earned; it comes with position and age. It seemed that the tactics (instructional strategies) that I had employed and that informed the crafting of my teaching seemed oddly out of place in this new context.*

How did I become a *gringa* teaching English in Puerto Rico? Were it not for my marriage to a military service member and our experiences living in Europe and several states as a military family, I think that I would be the tourist who comes to San Juan "to shop, eat, and play," and perhaps, like many White, middle-class consumers, return to the suburbs unaware of the often oppressive and exploitative effects of my presence in the world. I grew up in suburban Minnesota, the great-granddaughter of German and Austrian immigrant farmers in a White, working-class family. My parents were born and raised on farms in Minnesota and northern Wisconsin. When they met in the Cities (*I call it "the Cities" to indicate my insider status. "The Cities" is the term used by Minnesotans for the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul*) where my dad attended vocational school and my mom worked at a bank, they both felt that escaping the farm meant the opportunity to create a better life for themselves and their children. Although they didn't attend college themselves, they helped to make it a reality for me. College opened doors for me and provided opportunities that my parents never had, especially the opportunity to study, to travel, and to experience living in diverse cultures. *And of course, the opportunity to engage in this reflection, which I now see as a way of positioning myself in relation to "them," my parents, who I saw as confined by what I am calling their "lack" of opportunity. Nationalist ideologies of meritocracy and the idea that diversity should be celebrated are evident in my story* (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul (2008).

The second vignette, "Jellow," reveals my experience of feeling in between Puerto Rican and Anglo cultures as I explore my conflicting identities. I am an English teacher in a colonized commonwealth and wife of a native-born Puerto Rican Spanish

speaker. I am also daughter-and sister-in law to three Puerto Rican teachers and neighbor to White families on the military base where we lived, a two-hour drive from my husband's birthplace and family home. In this vignette, my personal and professional identities merge as I call upon professional knowledge as a literacy teacher and experiences in an extended Puerto Rican family to talk back to the racist discourses I felt permeated interactions between parents and teachers at the base school.

Jellow

"You know, she says 'jellow' for 'yellow.' I'm worried. He's having a hard time with reading. I'm thinking about home schooling him," Mary confided to me one afternoon as we lazed by the pool watching the kids swim. *Mary and I were the only two Army wives living on a coast guard base near Las Flores, a picturesque town on the west coast of Puerto Rico. Las Flores was a two-hour drive from the busyness of city life and tourism, and we felt privileged to live there. We all sent our kids to a school operated by the federal government for us in Las Flores. Mary's son, Jason, had just begun kindergarten and was learning to read in school.*

"No, don't do that. He would miss so much!" I replied. "I wouldn't worry. You don't say 'jellow' at home, do you? You read with him at home, right? Have you ever heard him say 'jellow' instead of 'yellow'?"

"No..., but I think he's all confused," Mary paused. *I could tell she was hesitant. I wondered if she felt awkward talking to me about this – knowing I was an English teacher and also married to a native-Spanish speaker who also pronounced "y" as "j" at times.* "What if he thinks the 'y' sound is 'j'? Won't he just be mixed up?" she continued.

"If you say 'yellow,' he will, too," I tried to reassure her. "He'll figure it out. He'll hear her say 'jellow' and know that she means the color 'yellow.' I wouldn't worry about it. Phonics is not the only method of reading instruction used at the school; it's just one way of teaching kids how to read. I'm sure he'll be fine."

Mary didn't sound too convinced, though, and I wouldn't have been surprised if she joined the group of White parents who were pulling children out of the government school and home-schooling them. From what I understood, many White families had been home-schooling their children even before coming to the island, but many more began here. *I thought it was partly because it was such a closed, tight-knit community, almost like a walled city.* Many of the other wives never left the base, and when they did, they came back with stories about people staring at and talking about them. *Never mind that these women were monolingual English speakers – how could they know what these “others” were saying, I wondered?* Some refused to buy local produce for sale on the side of the road, or chicken and rice from vendors in trucks with no running water. "How do they wash their hands?" one asked. "I would never eat there."

Some parents refused to send their kids to school even though it was well funded and employed highly trained, highly paid, certified teachers, the majority of whom were Puerto Rican. Some of these parents had children in kindergarten, like Mary, and they were worried about "mixed up" phonics instruction from bilingual teachers, while others were parents of upper elementary and middle school aged children who wanted a more rigorous curriculum than they thought Puerto Rican teachers could provide. *I felt offended by Mary's questions. I had applied for a teaching position there myself, and I knew it was a great school. I knew it had more financial resources than the rural public*

schools in which I had previously taught. My interactions with my children's teachers had been wonderful. I saw them as caring and highly competent. As I listened to Mary's complaints, I thought about the racist prejudices and stereotypes that I had seen permeating interactions between *gringos* and Puerto Rican teachers. For example, when I interviewed for the English teaching position at San Juan Christian School, the director asked me how many days I normally needed to take off from work. *I realized this was an odd, and probably illegal, question, but I wanted the position, so I answered that as a military spouse, I was often the only parent available for our three children when they were sick.* I replied that I normally took all of my allowed sick leave. The administrator warned me not to miss Fridays and Mondays, as the "Puerto Rican flu" was a problem at his school. *I am ashamed now that I didn't say anything back to him and that I took the job.*

The final vignette, "Why Do They Dress Like That?" portrays my struggles to understand and make visible the racist and sexist ideologies, assumptions, and beliefs that I carry within me as the granddaughter of German-American and Austrian-American Midwestern farmers. In it, I share a remembered conversation with a fellow-teacher at San Juan Christian School. I position myself as a cultural outsider and reveal a concealed story, a racist and sexist performance, in which I judge other women's attire. This story is an important part of my research narrative. It emerged when Patricia, a Latina teacher candidate, was reprimanded by her White, female principal for dressing "provocatively" (the principal's words) in the 5th grade classroom where she completed her student teaching. Patricia resisted the principal's interpretation of her attire and wrote a letter in her defense to her supervisor and to the chair of the elementary education department.

Her White, female cooperating teacher confirmed Patricia's interpretation and did not find her attire to be inappropriate for school. In her article, "Seduced by Images: Identity and Schooling in the Lives of Puerto Rican Girls," Rolon-Dow (2004) describes "the power that images created by and about Puerto Rican girls hold in shaping their schooling experiences." She finds that White teachers are unable to see middle school Latina girls as academically successful, in part, due to the teachers' overriding emphasis on the girls' sexuality, as perceived by the teachers to be expressed in their ways of dressing (p. 8). Rolon-Dow draws upon the intellectual work of feminists of color who assert that images and representations about women of color are powerful forms of domination and control. As I reflected on Patricia's experiences in light of the article, I felt the imperative to uncover and examine my own assumptions and biases as a White female teacher.

Why Do They Dress Like That?

"I think I figured out why Puerto Rican women dress the way they do," I stated matter-of-factly to Maritza, a fellow teacher at Las Flores Christian School, a private English language school in Puerto Rico where I taught for one year before returning to the Midwest to pursue graduate studies. *While Maritza was a Puerto Rican woman, I knew she had grown up and lived most of her life in New York – I thought she was an "outsider" here, like me. I probably thought that this gave me permission to say such things out loud to her. I wanted an ally and a friend; one who I thought might better help me understand why I didn't feel like I would ever fit in here.*

"Really? Why?" she asked.

"Because they can," I answered knowingly, as if those three words held some deep significance that Maritza might understand. *I have been thinking about this story*

ever since I put it into words on a page. I am afraid to publish it. I cringe at the memory of these thoughts, this conversation. I examine the title, my use of "they" as a referent for "Puerto Ricans." Clearly I am placing myself outside that category; clearly I am using my own "particular sex, culture, and experience as the reference point or yardstick for the 'evaluative judgment' of different cultures, standards, and practices" (Moghissi, 1994, p. 227). If racism is about how we perceive difference, my story is one of racist performance. Further, racist performance is complicated by gender positions. In other words, I must have thought that being a woman somehow gave me authority to talk about dress and what is appropriate or not for (other) women.

Maritza looked at me sideways, barely turning her head in my direction. She didn't say anything. I leaned forward with my elbows on the cool concrete edge of the balcony facing away from the classroom door behind us. Judging by the numbers of students still out in the open-air corridor instead of in the classrooms, and the clumps of them standing around on the grass and pebbles of the yard below us, we still had several minutes before third period. I took Maritza's silence and puzzled expression as a sign of interest and continued explaining my theory. *As I read bell hooks (1989), I finally begin to see and feel some of the tensions around whether or not (and how) I can or even should speak or write about my perceptions, assumptions, and experiences as a White woman. How arrogant of me to turn to Maritza and unload my "stuff," just put it all "out there," as if it belonged in the bright hot sun (hooks, 1989, p. 2).*

"Yeah, I notice how differently I dress from other women here," I continued. *There it is again, the "other" women "here." Positioning myself. Positioning the Other.* "First of all, it is just too hot to be wearing polyester and nylon, especially that tight

stuff.” Is “tight stuff” an evaluative judgment? Even if it is not, “that” certainly implies a subtle critique. “I’ve been sweating ever since I got here and those polyester tops and sundresses make it worse.” Another pronoun (“those”) distances me. The polyester tops I have in mind are brightly colored and silky-shiny-smooth, often baring skin in places that to me seem odd, like a smooth, bronzed shoulder or a bared back or midriff. “No way could I get nylons on in this humidity,” I added, appealing to my own (and my mother’s ideas) of “sensible” attire for hot summer weather. Yes, talk about the weather. It is the way into any conversation for a blonde, Midwestern farmer’s daughter from northern Minnesota. People bond when they talk about the weather, don’t they? Doesn’t it give us room to size up the situation (and each other)?

“You know what else?” I went on. “I think if I wore tight clothes like that, my mom would kill me. I think it was a Catholic guilt trip. That’s why she didn’t let me wear a two-piece swimming suit. She said they weren’t modest enough and she always pointed out girls in bikinis to tell me how unattractive they looked. She said it was better to ‘leave it to the imagination.’” What I wonder now is how do I get past her voice, and those of other Midwestern farmer’s wives – grandmothers, aunts, cousins, neighbors -- whose voices shaped me and continue to define my world view? One is the voice of my Catholic grandmother, whose life was geographically circumscribed by the small Wisconsin farming community where she was born, lived her entire life, and died. She once visited a son graduating from basic training in Alabama and another retiring from the Air Force in Alaska. They were the trips of a lifetime for her and my grandfather, who had to arrange to have all of the chores done and the cows milked twice a day by his brothers for the weeks they were gone. Another is the voice of my mother “talking back” (hooks,

1989) to my grandmother when she all but disowned her for marrying “that Lutheran,” my father. And I think I can hear my grandmother talking back to her parents, too, as my mom tells me the story of how my grandmother ran off into the woods on her wedding night at the age of seventeen, young and frightened of marriage.

Maritza still didn't say anything, but she was half smiling now. Maybe she was trying not to laugh. I turned to check out her expression, trying to gauge her response to my proclamations, but all I could see was her profile against the bright blue corner of the building. I noticed she was wearing a polyester blouse and skirt with nylons. Still, because I knew she was a “New Yorican” who had grown up on the mainland and was here to work for a year or two before going back to her job with the federal government, I decided it was safe to keep testing my hypothesis on her. “You know, I was thinking that maybe there's different expectations here, you know, for gender roles. Maybe girls can dress like that here because everybody knows there's a husband or a father or a brother standing right over there ready to protect her or fight anyone who tries to touch her,” I said. I plowed ahead unabashedly, “...like she doesn't have to worry about giving the wrong impression. Guys would know she's some other guy's sister or cousin or daughter. Where I'm from, if a girl dresses like that, people think she is loose or that she's ‘asking for it.’ They would say she deserves it if she gets sexually harassed or raped or something, you know?” *And here I lay out in the open the cultural mores and the sense of guilt that I have associated with the female body ever since I was nine years old and was embarrassed by my mother who said, in front of my father and my brothers, that it looked like it was time for me to be wearing a bra. I can still feel the flush of shame that crept*

into my cheeks at her pronouncement as I looked down at the front of my white cotton shirt. I have felt ashamed of my body ever since.

After a moment of silence, I continued, "I think maybe the rules are stricter here for what's appropriate for women, like, I can't even go for a walk alone here because my husband thinks it's not right for a woman to walk alone on the side of the road. And when he walks with me, he has to be on the same side as the traffic. At first I thought it was romantic, you know, like he was protecting me in case a car got too close to the edge and hit us or something. Then he told me that if he let me walk on that side it would mean I was available. Then, he got mad at me the time I asked my sister-in-law to take me to the cock fights where his brother and dad spend so much time." *Obviously a symbolic event and a metaphor for "men only need apply."* "I just wanted to see what all the fuss was about." *Why do I couch my rebellious act in a plea of innocent curiosity? I remember now that the one who was really mad most of the time was me -- for feeling left out, for being left behind, for not understanding the language, for not fitting in. Defining myself as "not Puerto Rican" meant, in my eyes, being able to do the things that the women in his family didn't do, like traveling alone or going to the cock fights.* "When my husband saw me walk in, he wouldn't even look at me. His brother came over to greet us, but my husband and his father didn't move from their side of the arena. He just turned away, and I could see the anger in his jaw. Later he told me that was 'no place for women.' So I was thinking about that and how women dress here." *At least I didn't say "those" women; but I qualify my intent with "here," invoking positionality anyway. Why do I focus on women and the way they dress rather than dig deeper into the real issues about patriarchy and machismo which I feel I have been fighting at every turn of my life both here and there?*

Then I asked Maritza, “Why is it okay to dress like that, yet not okay to do things like go for a walk alone? I think where I come from women have to take care of themselves. I wouldn’t depend on my dad or my brother to ‘defend my honor,’ you know? I go out walking by myself all the time, even at night sometimes.” *I can feel the child's quivering jaw and the tilt of her head as she asserts herself.* “I moved to California on my own when I was only nineteen.” *Years later, with my own daughter preparing to leave home for college, nineteen sounds at once too old to be a child and too young to be an adult. As I assert my independence, I again differentiate myself from "those" Puerto Rican women against whom I am defining myself. I am not one of those who stay home and knit and do everyone else's laundry and cook like my mother taught me -- like her mother taught her.* “So that’s why I think they dress like that. Because they can.”

Maritza turned toward me and kind of nodded her head a bit, a half-smile on her face. She still didn’t say anything. *You see, it's not about her. This story about “the other woman” is really about me – and also about my mother and her mother and her mother. It is about the complex interrelatedness of our sexist and racist ideologies and beliefs and how they are embodied in our talk and actions.*

Only one or two students remained in the corridor, so Maritza and I turned to our classroom doors, smiling and waving our good-byes. *I wonder what she thought about my Lutheran-Catholic gringa theories and me. Looking back, I see how I was just putting my stuff right out there in the bright hot sunlight. I see how my cultural frame of reference was influencing the ways I was interpreting the social world and how limiting*

that frame can be at the same time that I realize I can never really get out of it. I am thankful that Maritza did not laugh out loud at the narrow confines of my gringa-ness.

Conducting narrative research with Latino/a preservice teachers has led me to think carefully about social positioning and the relationship between researcher/researched in raced and gendered spaces. As I generate research stories with participants, I recognize that I cannot speak for them and that each research narrative represents a limited view of another person's story (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). I agree with Fernández (2002) that stories are mediated communicative events and that "there is no pure, complete story out there waiting to be recorded" (p. 49). I embrace narrative inquiry because it calls me to be explicit about ethical responsibilities in relation to those with whom I engage in the research puzzle. My own life story is folded into the stories of others. Through narrative reflexivity and the writing of these vignettes, I have envisioned myself as in-between social worlds. Being both insider and outsider, I carry the weight of conflicting ideologies and the grander stories we tell about each other and ourselves. Through this writing, I hope to locate myself as an ally and advocate for the subjects of my research -- *perhaps too heroically--but we are all the heroes of our own stories, aren't we?*

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Weaving New Understandings of Teacher Research as a Feminist Practice
By Mary Napoli

Teacher research is typically defined as “systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 7). It serves various purposes from reforming teaching practices, reflecting on teaching (Berthoff, 1987), and serving as a vehicle to embrace an emancipatory and transformative stance (Bullock, 1987; Kuzmic, 2002). In this emancipatory framework, teachers research themselves and their classrooms while freeing silenced voices to reclaim their work. “Women must write herself; must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal” (Cixous, 1981, p. 10). Thus, teachers must write about themselves, their journeys, and experiences to find hope and to feel empowered (Christianakis, 2008). In this essay, I choose to explore the lived experience as a window to understand the teacher’s personal history and identities as a faculty member. In fact, this development is not a linear projection or an orderly plan; rather, as Mary Catherine Bateson (1990) indicates, it is a composition.

My aim is to share my continued understanding of the relationship between teacher research and feminism within my role as a faculty member while exercising ownership and liberty in sharing my story. I have included some personal vignettes to explore issues of identity, authority and how this is shaped and understood and to embrace my beliefs that story is the foundation of teacher research and personal and professional change. As Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings (1991) wrote, “Whether writer or teller, the narrator of a story provides further meaning—an even further text-to-

the story being told. The narrator too has a story, one that is embedded in his or her culture, language, gender, beliefs and life history. This embeddedness lies at the core of the teaching-learning experience” (p. 3). I have also included boxed texts to visually represent the knots that create my individual “*lavori all unciento*,” an Italian phrase for a crocheted piece of fabric which has become an important symbol of my identity as an Italian-American woman. The knot metaphor illustrates the uniqueness and strength of individual threads intricately woven by the designer and each thread mirrors the story and history of its creator; therefore, inserting the box provides me a space to pull, tighten, untangle, and loosen threads that have become the fabric of my identity.

For feminist teacher researchers, it is important to create spaces for personal meaning and discovery of voice and to write and reflect toward the spirit of these theories; feminist research recognizes the epistemological value of using women’s experiences as resources for discovering new relationships (Harding, 1987). Thus, for teachers, it is imperative to reflect on public theory (work found in books, articles, conferences, on-line forums, etc.) while also honoring the stories and lived experiences of one’s life. As individuals craft their own stories, they begin to acknowledge the fluid integration of their lives as women, teachers, and researchers in order to nourish inclusiveness, change and growth.

Knot one: *A glimpse at the personal: The weaving of the “lavori all uncentto”*

When I was a young girl, I remember accompanying my mother and sister on many trips to Reggio Calabria, Italy to visit my grandparents and relatives. I recall spending many hours watching my grandmother transform brilliant white cotton thread into intricate and beautiful designs. With delicate ease and precision, my grandmother wove the fine threads for hours while humming tunes and sharing stories about my mother’s youth. My grandmother explained that the art of working with thread reflected the beauty of one’s soul and history. She told me that her hands would become lost in the design and her work was driven by love. She also said, “The ricordo d’affetto (tangible symbol of affection) will be passed to you to share with your own children.” I smiled. And then she added, “You will learn this craft, and one day teach it to your own children so that they too will understand.”

Did I ever learn the craft? Yes, but I failed miserably. However, I continued to watch and admire the skillful movements that both my mother and grandmother displayed as they created these extraordinary designs. Many decades later, I would recognize the entangled meaning and significance of the cloth as it impacted my personal and professional life.

Anna Neumann and Penelope Peterson (1997) describe research as a “personal endeavor, as experiences within and expressions of the researcher’s life” (p.1). When educators embrace this view of research, they can contemplate how the personal elements of one’s life, including historical influences, inform and shape one’s later endeavors; therefore, the feminist teacher researcher creates a mental space where she contests and reconstructs previous images of self, home, and school communities to inform her work. These conversations provide multiple ways of knowing (Neuman & Peterson, 1997) and present new knowledge that informs the research. To illustrate the inward conversations of self-reflection, I offer the following snapshot of my experiences, questions and connections to professional literature.

During childhood visits to my grandmother’s home, I observed the resilience of many generations of Italian women and marveled at the level of religious fervor and pragmatism that solidified their lives. I remember conversations about women, careers, and travel were virtually absent during these gatherings and that the women were always

in the kitchen. I recall experiencing a silent and internal rebellion but failed to utter a word. I wonder what happened to my need to speak about what I saw and how I felt.

Was this silence an act of resistance, oppression, or something else? As Gilligan's (1977) early research noted, women's difficulty speaking publicly in their own voices is grounded in self-doubt and divided judgments about public and private assessments that are fundamentally at odds. For me and other feminist teacher researchers, awareness of tensions among ethnic, gender, and familiar subcultures and reflection on epistemological systems of schooling and the public sphere can strengthen our voices to articulate positions both inside and outside these realms to create change.

Knot two: *A glimpse at the professional*

A few months before receiving my doctoral degree, my friends and I sifted through glossy pages of countless catalogs featuring the latest academic regalia. We reminisced about our past high school and college commencements. As I thought about the tassel, comprised of its 40-70 singular threads bound together, I pondered its symbolic significance in relationship to the threads of the *lavori*. For me, the tightly woven tassel threads defined academic, personal and professional possibilities whereas the *lavori* defined certain expectations of Italian women in my family. Reflecting on professional journeys can help teacher researchers shape a deeper understanding of the personal and professional significance those journeys play in their research.

In my own development as a teacher, the social and cultural rituals I experienced permitted me to revisit, revise, and subvert prescribed ideologies to open up new possibilities for a new sense of agency. As feminist teacher researchers reflect on the multiple genders, social, cultural and educational intersections in their lives, they can weave new understandings as performative effects or constructions to impact change.

Knot three: *Identifying the work of a teacher researcher as feminist practice*

Before entering higher education, I taught kindergarten and first grade. I conducted classroom research exploring social constructions of gender. I recall using children's books to engage students in conversations aimed at critically exploring ideological messages about how girls and boys should act. Little did I know that these conversations would lead to inquiries about gender in early childhood and the impact of images depicted in children's literature. During my tenure as an early childhood educator, I recall questioning, challenging, and refining my teaching to create classroom change. Then during my doctoral studies, I worked with pre-service teachers to document their understanding of gender and children's literature. However, I became interested in their stories and how these experiences can be viewed as critical instruments, a term coined by Teresa de Lauretis (1984) to illuminate ideologies and the stories by which lives and teaching practices are constructed. It was this discovery that added to the unique design of the *lavori* to provide me with an understanding of the interrelationship between feminist teacher research and its role in my work with future educators.

Within the classroom community, a feminist teacher researcher can sustain critical reflections about how self-identity and the identities of students have been constructed by and within the culture. Feminist author bell hooks (1994) reminds us that “a community is required—not just for safety, but because community can sustain a commitment, can nurture individual and community agency and can result in action” (p. 148). As teacher educators embrace the work of feminist pedagogues (Maher & Tetreault, 1994; Middleton, 1993, etc.), they can raise personal and professional consciousness to help students problematize their learning and reconsider their position(s) of privilege, silence, and reinforced home/school relationships. This dialectic and critical gaze into our lives can help us unfreeze current visions of ourselves and consider new ways of acting and being in the classroom. In constructing this narrative, I have created a space to recall my reflections while simultaneously dismantling them toward alternate ways of acting. These sites and struggles within the context of politically charged values, expectations, and assumptions continue to provide opportunities to see inquiry and

research in my teaching as partial, limited, and actively constructed and attributed to conscientization (Freire, 1986).

Teachers are always asking questions. For teacher educators embracing feminist pedagogy, the intersection between teaching and research leads to continued negotiation and reaffirmation of values while simultaneously considering those of their students, surroundings, and individual and collective differences and similarities. Some questions that we ponder include, “What values are evident? How are these understood? Whose knowledge is represented? Whose research is it, after all?” Conducting teacher research redefines teachers’ work and offers opportunities to listen to students. In my work with pre-service teachers, I have learned that teacher research has the power to transform how they learn information about teaching, learning communities, and literature. Moreover, when students reflect on their own lives while situating their new knowledge in practical applications of reading children’s books for gender, they begin to broaden their understanding of their past perceptions. Teacher research as a feminist act challenges and changes understandings and promotes awareness of a multiplicity of voices and ideas that contribute to full participation in the community (Gallas, 2001).

Teacher research provides opportunities that empower classroom teachers to position themselves as both subject and object. We construct our own identities, realities and histories, thus we become not only the subjects but also the objects of study. As teacher researchers who embrace feminist pedagogy, we challenge traditional paradigms in order to advance the voices of ourselves and our students. As Bonner (2006) argues, “teacher change, like most human change, must emanate from within” (p. 41). My roles as a teacher of children’s literature and researcher engaged in study and reflection aimed

at improving my craft have enabled me to continually grow as an educator while I guide future teachers on paths toward becoming agents of change in their own classrooms.

I believe that the art of teaching is rooted in self-reflection and exploration. As bell hooks stated, “When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two - the ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other” (p.61). This quotation has served as a powerful catalyst for combining theory and practice within the context of my teaching that has resulted in improvements in my course delivery and instruction. In my undergraduate children’s literature course, teacher candidates and I become co-participants in the learning process. We read, evaluate, and respond to various forms of literature including poetry, multicultural literature, picture books, and expository texts and engage in teaching and learning from each other.

My students and I respond to literature by considering text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections as we explore issues of justice and cultural awareness. We engage in writing personal narratives and then meet in small groups for literature discussions in which we share and compare our responses to and interpretations of texts. We co-construct knowledge, negotiate meanings of books, evaluate ideas and propose new possibilities. For many of my students, these are the first opportunities they have to speak about their own identities and ideas. These experiences build skills that enable them to communicate their thoughts with respect and tolerance of others and empower them to exercise critical inquiry within a welcoming community that they/we have established.

Using children's literature to raise the consciousness of future teachers by exploring justice and engaging in critical thinking is just one way for transforming practice and becoming agents of change. The possibilities of co-creating knowledge about literature and our personal and shared identities also provides us opportunities to explore the gendered nature of schooling and literature, issues of power dichotomies and agency, social dynamics and responsibilities in a community of learners, the value of diversity, and ways of sharing personal and emotional responses to books. Shifting from teacher to co-learner, I put into practice the core of feminist pedagogy and research where both teacher and students interrogate and analyze their own experiences with openness and honesty in order to question, understand and reconceptualize the future of classroom learning.

I hope to add my voice to the collective chorus of others who have shared their explorations of self within feminist teacher research. Documenting my personal journal in this essay also has given me opportunities for archaeological discovery and digging deeper into my home, school and professional experiences for details that connect and move my position and thinking from moment to moment. Like the knots of my *lavori*, my resolutions to embrace feminist teacher research in my classroom become stronger with each exploration. In my *lavori*, commitment, strength, character and hope are woven with personal and professional discoveries of emotion, fear, imaginable contexts, desires, transformations and transcendence.

Final knot: *Questions to consider: Sharing the lavoro with others*

The classroom context remains a place of possibility and change, and, through sharing personal histories about schooling, books, and identities, it can open our students' hearts to honor the voices of others. Asking and conversing about teaching for change is at the heart of reimagining our personal and professional selves. As I consider the lavoro in terms of its connection to the profession, I believe that it can clarify our relationships to our lives, with others, and to the teachers we want to be. Tapping into personal and professional histories about schooling and identity can serve as an invigorating exercise in untangling positive and challenging moments to provide renewal and transformation. Some questions that teachers can consider include:

How do we redefine equity and empowerment in a classroom?

How can we create a classroom community as a safe place to honor all voices and silences?

How can we emphasize the processes over the products of learning while still teaching essential elements and skills of the curriculum?

How can we honor the private, personal and subjective as well as the public, impersonal and objective?

How can we hold onto a vision for a better tomorrow in our classrooms?

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Reading Fabrics of Choice:

A Study of Women's Redesign of Popular Media to Grow Voice and Social Identity

By Donna Mahar

Background for the Study

In this article, I share my explorations of concerns and actions related to social, professional, and personal images constructed by women with popular media. I invite readers to join me in recollections of my experiences as a teacher educator and findings as a researcher interested in understanding the choices my students and other women make to establish identities and voices in their respective cultures. We'll start with the words of two female students who helped me begin this journey.

During a class conversation on social identity, one of my students remarked that she did not use her first name, Raven, in an e-mail address in high school because people automatically thought she was Goth. Unable to present herself physically in electronic contexts, Raven didn't want to be misrepresented by what she felt her first name implied. This led another student to ask Jen if she was going to wear her pentacle earrings and oak wreath necklace when interviewing for secondary teaching positions. "One Druid I know didn't wear her jewelry until after she received tenure," Jen responded. "I'm going to wear mine from the start because it is part of who I am. I'm not going to bring this up in job interviews or in my classroom, but I'm not going to censor what my jewelry says about who I am. I don't think this would be a question if I chose to wear a cross or Star of David." These comments demonstrated these students' awareness of the power cultural perceptions have on how they are viewed and defined by those around them.

As a teacher educator, my participation in discussions with students like Raven and Jen became an impetus for my investigations of women's redesign of popular media such as clothing and jewelry and their reasons for choices made to express themselves and their social identities. Raven and Jen understood that how they were perceived and interpreted by others was influenced by physical presentation, whether a name used in a virtual space or a defining artifact worn in a real-time environment.

During the same semester when Raven and Jen identified limitations and miscommunications that can occur in the cultural contexts of on-line communications and public school environments, I visited an exhibit of kanga cloth in an adjacent classroom that fueled my interest in exploring women's redesign of popular media. Kanga cloth is printed with political symbols and slogans and worn by East African women to establish their voices in political and social issues for which they may have previously been silenced (Biersteker). The functionality of kanga cloth can be seen in wraps, veils, totes, and baby carriers. These brightly colored, machine-printed textiles feature repetitive designs and foreground a Swahili saying or proverb in the lower corner, allowing wearers to quietly express their positions on events and issues of importance in their cultures.

As suggested by Lewis and Del Valle, choices made by my students to represent or protect their identities in public forums and by women wearing kangas to comment on political issues illustrate that identity portrayed through artifacts and associations are "hybrid, metadiscursive, and special" (316). The variety of approaches to creating social identity in different cultural contexts that is revealed in statements made by Jen, Raven and women in kangas also corroborate Alvermann's premise that "all cultures, as

historically evolved ways of doing life, teach people about what is worth working for, how to succeed, and who will fall short” (13).

According to de Certeau, modern youth may behave much like women wearing kanga cloth to express social and political views in environments intent on silencing their voices. Conclusions drawn by de Certeau indicate that young people use clothing as a tactic of resistance to enact literacy messages and texts in spaces that traditionally have established filters for youths’ engagement in and redesign of popular media. In addition, Raven’s and Jen’s deliberate selections of labels and artifacts for representing themselves support de Certeau’s contention that young people in contemporary cultures carefully construct identities with acute awareness of and, in some cases, resistance to social expectations.

Working from what I learned from students, women who wear kanga cloth, and premises proposed by Alvermann, de Certeau, and Lewis and Del Valle, I conducted a 22-month study with 12 adolescents. The study was guided by the New London Group’s multiliteracy theory, a perspective developed in the mid 1990s that views literacy and texts as fluid, multidimensional entities constantly undergoing redesign based on individual needs for full participation and accurate representation in their own culture (Jenkins et al.). Jenkins and colleagues posit that a participatory culture has “low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices” (3). The concept of participatory culture allowed me to draw together what I had learned from students like Raven and Jen and the kanga prints of East African women as I initiated a formal study of how use youth employ

performance and presentation to embody the multimodalities posited by the New London Group.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The multiliteracy theory generated by the New London Group (NLG) addresses what this pedagogy of literacy learning and use means by elaborating on the importance of different aspects of Design. Cope and Kalantzis described tensions among the NLG's aspects of Design, which are created by available Design such as kanga cloth and pop-culture clothing and the act of Designing, which is how individuals interpret and utilize the available Design. Cope and Kalantzis explained that Design leads to the Redesigned or "the resources that are produced and transformed through the Designing" (23). Both the East African women's use of kanga cloth and Jen's use of media designs constitute the Design/Redesign process, a "re-presentation and recontextualisation" (22) of the original use and function of the cloth and clothing. The NLG's concept of gestural design allows a message to be conveyed without any violation of established social protocol. Elements that constitute gestural design include "behavior, bodily physicality, gesture, sensuality, feelings and affect, kinesics, and proxemics" (26).

Participants and School

The 12 youths followed over nearly a two-year period were identified during school visits and participant observations for a prior study. The research took place in a suburban middle school where more than 95% of the students were of European American decent. The community was mixed in socioeconomic status. The guidance counselor estimated that one sixth of the students were from professional households, one third from households where adults were employed in business and service industries,

one third from households where adults were employed in manual labor that was not always steady employment, and one sixth of the students lived in foster placement, or custodial placement with relatives.

Research Methodology and Data Sources

This 22-month qualitative study (Spradley) used a collective case study method (Stake) to highlight six of the 12 informants who shared affinity spaces based on similar fashion choices. In addition, one female student was interviewed more extensively than others to collect detailed data and provide examples that illustrate the findings from the larger group.

Data were collected through participant observations in and out of school where students' selections of attire were observed based on acceptance and resistance to participatory cultural groups with which they intersected. In focus groups conducted in school, students were asked about choices they made regarding fashion, specifically when these choices included logos, slogans, and messages. Out-of-school interviews occurred at participants' homes, local libraries, restaurants, and stores. Questions that were asked uniformly across these interviews included:

- 1) "What influenced your selection for how you are dressed in this environment?"
- 2) "Compared to how you presented yourself while in X, what influenced this change in appearance?" (If a change occurred.)
- 3) "Where do you feel the most congruence between your dress and environment?"

Data was collected via e-mail, Facebook, My Space, and visits to sites visited by participants.

Coding and analysis of data was done continuously and recursively, and the following themes emerged: functionality, duplicity, regulation (such as selections made because of sports or orchestra), and Redesign. Data related to on-line representation such as with avatars and in descriptions, stood out in need of further explanation, which led to additional interviews with individuals and in focus groups. Analysis began inductively by examining transcripts, field notes, and artifacts. Taxonomies and other graphic representations (Spradley) were used to clarify and connect themes across the corpus of data. Follow-up questions were asked as data were coded to clarify meanings of responses and help ensure that aspects of youth culture, especially as related to popular media, were accurately represented.

Results

The students formed overlapping participatory cultural groups in which they began composing textual performances in collaborations with others who shared their affinity to resistance as identified by clothes, slogans, and self-designed fashion bricolage. Gee's notion of affinity spaces and Wenger's concept of community of practice helped me understand that the participatory cultures created within this academic space afforded the expression of social, political, and popular-culture messages that would not be allowed within traditional frameworks of written and oral discourse. This informal mentorship among youths raised a question about whether the messages they conveyed through fashion choices were intended or solely a by-product of wanting to be accepted within the affinity space.

Using the multiliteracy pedagogy and de Certeau's tactics of resistance as the lenses for analysis, I found that the data revealed that informants were making deliberate and conscious choices about how, when, where, and with whom they would engage in their personal literacies. Unlike the East African women who relied on the kanga to convey their political or social views, the youth in this study clearly articulated their rationales for the literacy choices they made. Their choices went beyond the pleasure aspect associated with texts of popular culture. They were able to clearly articulate choices they made in order to resist the school scripts they felt were in opposition to their views on class, gender, and ethnicity. Often the youth in the study used literacy events to disrupt established patterns of perception within the school. For females, this led to inconsistent fashion selections they hoped would be viewed as androgynous in an attempt to disrupt traditional expectations of how a successful girl student should dress. At other times gender and sexuality became much more fluid. When she did not feel the need to script a costume, one young woman's appearance was a mix of masculine and feminine. In interviews she very clearly stated the difference, as she saw it, between gender and sex. This ability to articulate the power and perceived autonomy garnered by fashion selections is something that eluded the women of East Africa.

Data from the case study of one female informant, Colleen, resonated with the on-line experience of my student Raven, who commented on her need to be in control of both on-line and real time social perceptions regarding her identity. Colleen's on-line signature follows. It sets the stage for her responses to popular culture, responses that were illustrated through her fashion selections as a mode of textual performance.

Colleen dePointe du Lac, the Anti-Britney, aka rocket queen high priestess of ozz, disposable teen, Taltos, sister of Ashlar mistress of axel rose & professional builder of mechanical animals hail to the almighty Ozz god! (They call me Mr. Tinkertrain, so come along and play my game, you will never be the same!)“you know where you are? You’re in the jungle baby! You’re gonna die...!

Her reference to “de Pointe du Lac” refers to her voracious readings of Anne Rice books and subsequent research on vampires and serial killers. “Taltos, sister of Ashlar” is again a reference to print sources of mythological Amazon like females. This reference, coupled with the “Anti-Britney, aka rocket queen, and disposable teen” gives a glimpse on her views of a certain segment of popular culture often privileged by mainstream representations of adolescents depicted in television shows and movies such as *Hannah Montana*, *High School Musical*, *Camp Rock*, and *I-Carley*.

This on-line autobiographical snippet is a stark contrast to the picture that would emerge if you were to read Colleen’s school records without meeting her. School records paint a picture of a traditional all-American youth as depicted by mainstream media culture: a straight-A student, first chair in the prestigious school marching and jazz bands, regular attendee at her church and confirmation classes, participant in a community soccer club, and summer counselor at a church-related camp.

Although Colleen occasionally wore long, flowing black skirts accompanied by black ruffled tops with corsets over them and completed the outfit with lace-up military boots, a reoccurring theme in many interviews was her desire to be androgynous. Her usual daily garb consisted of the chunky boots, often laced over jeans with rips filled in with assorted fishnet material, T-shirts with logos promoting heavy-metal bands from the

1980's, and spiked necklaces and bracelets along with dangling crystals and pendants. Her nails were often painted black, and her shoulder-length hair was usually highlighted a dark, unnatural henna. The contrast between Colleen's public persona and autobiographical signature and the all-American-girl record in her guidance folder dossier presented seemingly anomalous images of this individual. Colleen's expansion of required literacy competencies through redesign of old literacy skills to incorporate new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for new social contexts (Jenkins et al.) illustrates how the recursive elements of the NLG's multiliteracy pedagogy problematize the flat characterizations of contemporary adolescents in mainstream media texts.

Discussion

Participants in this study demonstrated behaviors aligned with Michel de Certeau's notions about tactics of resistance and how they serve as "guileful ruse" (37). de Certeau sees a guileful ruse as a tactic of the weak, a method used by those who do not hold power in the dominant society. Raven's name, Jen's Druid necklace, and the kanga cloth, for example, allowed the individuals to present themselves and perform in ways that assert their identities and, at times, to create a participatory sub-culture within the borders of the established, and often repressive, dominant culture. The adolescents who took part in this study showed me how commodities originally designed to support the dominant economic and social structure can be used as a way to resist and oppose the principles that culture espouses. Kanga cloth as well as the conscious fashion choices made by Jen and participants in the study expand the notion of text to incorporate selectively chosen textiles and artifacts that present a message through performance. The

political slogans woven into the kanga cloth afforded women a canvas for presenting an opinion in a society where their verbal expressions were silenced. By finding subtle, yet tactical ways to circumvent school dress codes, youths in this study were able to make identity statements that otherwise would have been allowable only outside the school boundaries. In both cases, the use of textiles as performance texts allowed these groups to form participatory sub-cultures that provided support and mentoring.

Participants in this study used their favorite pop-culture texts to create behaviors, bodily physicality, gestures, and affect that directly challenged traditional views of how a successful student should look in school. Students demonstrated four of the seven aspects of the NLG's concept of gestural design through presentation and performance that fell short of actually violating established social protocol (Cope and Kalantzis). The youths also appeared to intuit and exhibit all major functional grammars or meta-languages that describe and explain patterns of meaning in multiliteracies. In addition to gestural design, they exhibited linguistic design, visual design, audio design, spatial design, and multimodal design (Cope and Kalantzis), which allowed them to expand personal definitions of literacy beyond traditional norms of reading and writing. Design, particularly the aspect of Redesign, challenged traditional notions of what constitutes the successful, well-rounded student and raised the question: Are schools becoming places where an honor student and star soccer player can present herself as an androgynous Goth?

Future Trends

The youths in this study were able to recognize the value of established literacy practices and cultural norms while at the same time they were willing to challenge and

redesign aspects of conventional wisdom, and conventional schooling that struck them as counterproductive. Moje cautions against, “the trend toward romanticizing youth literacy practices in a way that overlooks the social, political, and economic importance-indeed necessity-of developing strong academic literacy skills and practices, particularly those focused on print” (207). Colleen’s knowledge and mastery of academic codes and conventions allowed her to negotiate a space for her out-of-school interests within the school day. Lacking this knowledge and proficiency would have negated her ability to redesign established aspects of the school culture to allow space for her texts of choice.

Much has been written by researchers concerning the creation of third spaces, areas where ICT and popular texts intersect with academic literacies, ideally to benefit the goals of both students and teachers (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez, and Chiu; Moje; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer et al.). Moje questions whether these third spaces are always “valuable and desirable” (216); however, for the youth in this study the intersection served as both. Having opportunities to share thoughts regarding fashion and popular culture with peers both on-line and in research focus groups and to formulate and explain their thinking through metacognitive reflection our interviews encouraged, provided the youths a scaffold for the Design/Redesign process. Metacognitive reflection and establishing affinity spaces based on political and social ideology regarding kanga choices was not something the women of East Africa had opportunities to do. This presents a question for future research studies on the importance of affinity groups when individuals use tactics of resistance to circumvent established social, political, and economic factions. Future research could also address the personal relevance of a resistant message conveyed via performance if there is no affinity group to support the

message or continue the conversation. When she enters the classroom as a novice teacher, Jen will most likely find herself in a space devoid of her Druid affinity group. If she did wear her jewelry as she announced, Jen would enact a tactic of resistance regarding cultural and religious artifacts typically accepted in a public school setting. However, there is a distinct possibility that no one in the school would read her pentacle earrings and oak wreath necklace as anything other than fashionable adornments, which also raises questions that may need to be addressed in future research on redesign of popular media that individuals to grow in their voices and social identities.

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“Why Does She Hear the Heartbeat?” Helping Pre-service Teachers Question Power and Gender in Children’s Literature

By Suzanne M. Knezek

Introduction

When I was in elementary school, the librarian, Mrs. Hill, was one of my best friends. I loved to read adventure stories about cowboys, horses, and life in the West, but the other kids considered such tales to be books for boys. Mrs. Hill helped me avoid teasing by reserving a stack of books for me each week. She would hand it over with a wink and usually with a *Nancy Drew* text placed carefully on top. At the time it never occurred to me to ask why none of the stories I loved were written by women or featured major female characters in positions of power. Now I ask those questions all the time.

Frame and Purpose

During the past several decades a great deal of scholarship has focused on engaging students in critical readings of literature. These readings encourage students to actively question texts and their authors about issues of power in relation to gender, culture, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and geographic location. Pre-service teachers, however, are often inexperienced with what it means to actually engage in critical reading and are even less sure of how they can facilitate such readings with children. Apol, Sakuma, and Rop found that when opportunities to engage in critical readings are “explicitly offered them, many of these teachers-in-training actively resist” (429). Such findings trouble me greatly because I teach children’s literature primarily to female pre-

service teachers. I know the children's books they encounter may under-represent or misrepresent traditionally marginalized populations, including girls and women. A constant concern is that these teacher candidates will resist questioning how gender is represented in children's literature. To address this issue I have included books written by and about women on the lists of required readings for my courses. I am aware, however, that it is not enough to simply correct the literary canon by substituting "Cather for Twain" (Obbink 40). Instead, we need to change both the canon *and* the way we teach people of all ages to read.

Part of our attempt to rethink the traditional "masculine" canon needs to begin on a deeper and more fundamental level: we must begin by challenging the very way we think about texts and the questions we bring to them. Once we have begun to formulate different questions and to practice different modes of reading, it becomes possible to adopt "revisionary tactics" toward literature and the canon -- tactics that are not just theoretical moves, but which enable students to see women and their experiences, and which provide female readers and writers (including those in our classes) with a context and tradition connecting them to a larger community of women (Obbink 40-41).

How, I wondered, will teacher candidates respond when required to write and discuss in ways that ask them to engage in Obbink's revisionary tactics? In this article I describe elements of an assignment created to assist pre-service teachers as they began to critically question and discuss varied children's texts. I also share discussion samples that highlight how one small group responded when asked to

question, write about, and discuss representations of power specifically as they related to gender in one picture book and one young adult novel.

Methods and Materials

Participants and Setting

The data analyzed for this inquiry were gathered from one section of a semester-long, required children's literature course taught primarily to undergraduate students in a teacher preparation program offered at a large, suburban university in the Midwestern United States. Students enrolled in the course were generally in their third or fourth year of the program. I taught the section of the course that provided data presented here, but several other sections were offered at the same time. I worked with a team of instructors who designed the course syllabus and assignments and collaborated on a larger, long-term study investigating various ways pre-service teachers responded to children's and adolescent literature. The data gathered and analyzed for this study was a subset of the data in the team's larger study and included written artifacts from teacher candidates and transcripts of audiotapes from their literature discussions. I also kept an instructor's journal, which featured my field notes and summaries of what had happened inside and outside of class, reflections on the nature of critical response, and any other notes I had taken about related conversations, interactions, and readings.

Of the 27 students enrolled in the course, 25 agreed to take part in the study. The majority of the students were European Americans, but there were also several African-American and Asian-American participants. Most of the students were

between the ages of 19 and 23, with a few who were 24 to 27 years old. Of the 25 participants in the study, 22 were females, and the rest were males.

Data samples highlighted in this paper came from one small group of students as they discussed power and gender in two texts. Students were randomly assigned to groups, and four members of the featured group agreed to participate in the study. They are identified in this article by pseudonyms Lari, Sara, Erin, and Kris. A fifth group member chose not to participate so all comments and writings from that teacher candidate were removed from the data collected. Data from the four group members who agreed to participate are included here because they forward themes found in analyses of data from all participants. However, it is important to note that these are just snapshots or vignettes that cannot fully capture the rich nature of all the discussions that took place.

I am a middle-class, European-American woman and was 40 years old at the time of this study. As the course instructor I was both a participant and researcher in this qualitative study, and I chose to frame it in the tradition of teacher research that Cochran-Smith and Lytle defined as “a systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers” (3). I gathered and recorded information, documented experiences inside and outside the classroom, and created written records to implement the teacher research model described by Cochran-Smith and Lytle.

Analysis

The teacher candidates’ written and illustrated artifacts included assigned papers and art objects created in response to texts, transcriptions of audio-taped discussions, and anecdotal records in the instructor’s journal. All were gathered and analyzed using

grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss). Grounded theory is built on the premise that, as a researcher reads through and codes the data, theoretical concepts will emerge.

Researchers who use grounded theory generally ask questions such as, “What is the situation?” and “What’s going on in this data?” As I was trying to understand what happened when teacher candidates were required to engage in critical readings of and discussions about the ways power and gender were represented in texts, I wanted to approach my data without preconceived theoretical notions about what I would find and to be open to themes that emerged as salient and common elements in students’ responses to texts.

Literature for Discussions

The four books used in this study were *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak), *Voices in the Park* (Browne), *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan) and *The City of Ember* (Du Prau). Books were chosen for the larger study by the instructional team based on five factors. First, consideration was given to the overall excellence of the texts, i.e., literary and genre characteristics, reputations and recognitions of authors and illustrators, and quality of illustrations. Second, genres like science fiction and fantasy, which are often underrepresented in classroom libraries, were included. Third, we questioned representations of diversity and looked for texts that reflected accurate and widely varied perspectives. Fourth, a balanced mix of genders in both protagonists and authors was a definite goal. Fifth, we located literature that would challenge our pre-service teachers as they built knowledge about reading and

responding to children's and adolescent literature. In this paper I have incorporated data collected in relation to students' discussions of two of the four required texts.

Assignment Description

Reader response theory advances the idea that, depending on life experiences and purposes for reading, there are many ways that readers can respond to text (Rosenblatt). This concept is important because it implies that, if given the chance, the teacher candidates participating in the book discussion groups would likely respond to those books in a range of complex ways. I, along with the other members of the instructional team, wanted to understand, anticipate, and then institutionalize some of the more common reader responses in the form of class assignments and activities. We then drew upon the work of literature discussion scholars, such as Daniels, McMahon et al., and Wilhelm, to establish reader response role descriptions our students would take on when reading and talking about children's literature. In doing so we hoped to have teacher candidates experience what it was like not only to read and respond to literature in multiple ways, but also to reflect upon and have a deep understanding of the response roles, the perspectives those roles help them develop, and why reading from multiple perspectives might be important. In total, we established five roles: facilitator/personal, textual, intertextual, artistic, and critical. Descriptions of all roles are detailed in *"But I'm Not Good At Art": Pre-service Teachers' Understandings Of Artistic Response To Children's And Adolescent Literature* by Knezek. Because this study focuses solely on elements of the critical response role, expectations for that role appear below.

The person responsible for critical response

- explores questions about issues of power surrounding race, class and gender (who has power in this book and who does not) and voice (who is heard in this book and who is not)
- talks about the book's expressed and implied beliefs
- talks about what the author might want readers to believe, how the author works to make that happen and what the author seems to assume about readers and about the subject (Knezek 17)

Every teacher candidate was expected to take the lead for all roles by the end of the term, so everyone was responsible for the critical response role at least once during the semester. On the day of the discussion, critical respondents came to class with a two-to-three page paper that addressed expectations in the role description during discussions that usually lasted 30 minutes. It was their job to make sure that members identified who had power and voice in the book, especially when it came to race, class, and gender. Preparing response papers prior to discussions required critical respondents to begin reading critically as soon as they opened the book.

Findings and Discussions

When I analyzed the data collected for this study, I became aware that two major themes were emerging. In the next two sections I provide examples of the themes found in transcripts of the small group discussions that occurred.

Do Silence and Absence Matter?

Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak), a classic picture book, details a young boy's journey through a fantastical land where he becomes king, only to return back home again all in one night. When discussing gender and power in their first small group session, Sara and Kris had a brief exchange that provides an example of the first of the major themes that arose from the analysis of this data: whether or not discussions of gender and power matter when women are not seen or heard in the text.

Kris: Sara, I know you must have had a difficult time trying to come up with a critical response...

Sara: I did because, like, for the critical response, it's like, you have to evaluate the book on like who has the power in relation to race, gender, and class, but none of them related to *Where the Wild Things Are*. The only one raised in this book is the parent and the child relationship so I don't think the gender really mattered because initially the mom has the power, but, um, the power, in the end falls in the boy's hands because he's like, "Okay, I'm going to be king and go away to this land where you can't tell me what to do...."

In this example, Kris, the group facilitator, invites the critical perspective in by acknowledging that Sara had to do it, but she also resists the idea that such a reading can be done by telling Sara she must have had a difficult time with the role. Sara, by stating that none of the issues she was asked to consider related to *Where the Wild Things Are*, also initially resists the notion that a critical reading can be

achieved. However, she does go on to discuss issues of gender when she highlights the power dynamic between the mother and child in the book.

The character of the mother in *Where the Wild Things Are* is never shown in the illustrations. Instead, she is heard only on the first few pages when she calls her son a wild thing and sends him to bed without dinner. Because she is conspicuously absent physically and her voice is never heard again, she is largely absent and silent in the text. It appeared to Kris and Sara that this meant there was not much, if anything, to say about power and gender in this text. Yet feminist and literary scholars would argue that this is just the issue that teachers need to help students read against in the classics that make up the canon for all ages (Obbink 1992). Instead of asking why the only human character seen in the book is a white male, why he has the majority of the power throughout most of the text, and what impact that might have on those reading the book, group members accepted the lack of female presence and voice and did not argue Sara's premise that "gender really didn't matter" in critical readings of *Where the Wild things Are*.

Who Are We Without Them?

Esperanza Rising (Ryan,) is a novel-length piece of historical fiction that contains a great deal of social commentary. It is unique in that it presents little known information about the struggles of Mexicans and Mexican Americans during the Great Depression and does so primarily through female characters (including the main character, Esperanza) dealing with loss, change in socioeconomic status, prejudice, gender issues, and familial relationships. In their discussion of this text,

Lari, Kris, and Erin captured a second major theme: whether or not women can be happy and whole without family or men by their sides.

Lari: Okay, so I wanted to start out tonight our discussion with, um, how the book started out with Esperanza and her father and lying on the ground and feeling a heartbeat, how she didn't hear it in the middle when she was alone, and how it ended...with Miguel lying on the ground and listening to the heartbeat with her. So what does that all mean? Why does she hear the heartbeat?

Kris: At the beginning she had this intense feeling of family with her father and she could sense it; she could hear the heartbeat then. But when she was traveling she had just lost her sense of her father, and her family, and where she was going, and she couldn't, she couldn't hear it. And then towards the end I thought it was pretty interesting that she had tried once more and then she could hear it again. And she was lying next to Miguel.

Erin: You know one of the things...when, when you say that, when you think about it, it bothered me a little bit that she could only hear the heartbeat when there was a man lying next to her. Going back to this idea of gender and power made me think that. But the way that you're talking about it now puts a very different spin on it and, you know, being somebody who knows she is a part of something greater and being lost from that for a time period. And then coming back to it, but in a different way.

Kris: I did think it was about gender at first. I thought, well, maybe she's just hearing the heartbeat of the man next to her and, like, she can't hear her own heartbeat or the heartbeat of the land without a man there.

Lari: I never thought of that! I always thought the heartbeat was the sound of her heartbeat in the earth. But if that was true, then why can't she hear the heartbeat when she's alone? Oh that bothers me. Why does a man have to be there for her to hear it?

In this exchange Lari began the discussion with a question she thought had nothing to do with power and gender, only to be introduced to a different way to read the text by her group mates. Especially interesting is Erin's contribution, in which she initially comments about disliking the notion that Esperanza could only hear the mystical heartbeat in the presence of a man. She then goes on to build on Kris's interpretation in seeing Esperanza as someone who has grown beyond herself – as someone who “knows she is a part of something greater.”

It is true that Esperanza matures a great deal over the course of the book. At the beginning she is characterized as a spoiled girl who is adored by her father. By the end of the text Esperanza has survived terrible personal and socioeconomic loss, learned to work hard, and largely triumphed (with, of course, the support of her childhood friend and potential love interest, Miguel). At least one question remains, however, for critical readers considering power and gender: Could Esperanza have made it without the help of others, especially Miguel?

While Lari found the question about the role of men in Esperanza's life to be distressing, it is a key question to consider. After all, *Esperanza Rising* is a text written by and about women – just the kind of book that challenges the established literary canon. Yet Lari, Erin, and Kris found that, after actively employing a “revisionary tactic” and simply questioning just who had power and who didn't in the novel, the messages it conveyed about gender were not necessarily as positive and clear as they had originally thought.

Because these findings are based on data gathered in a single class, they cannot be generalized. They do show, however, that when this section of pre-service teachers read quality children's literature and were invited to write about and discuss that literature in structured and meaningful ways, they began to overcome resistance to critically questioning texts. They interrogated the messages the books forwarded about gender and power, the representations found (and not found) in them, and the intentions of their authors. It follows, then, that teacher educators must “confront the task of learning to re-envision texts, to reposition ourselves, and to re-imagine the traditional questions that have included white men and excluded women (and men of color) from full participation in a literary tradition and from our larger system of social power itself” (Obbink 43). In doing so we can help pre-service teachers and their future students to find their own power by asking *why* they hear certain heartbeats (messages) when they read. Is the sound their own -- or is someone else dictating a rhythm and message?

Author's Acknowledgment: My thanks to the team: Laura Apol, Thomas Crisp, Jacqueline LaRose, Valerie Struthers Walker, Claire Vandenburg, and Kurnia Yahya . This work would not have happened without them.

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Am I a Keeper of the Dream? A Critical Reflection of *The Dreamkeepers*, 20

Years Later

By Cheron Hunter Davis

As a teacher for children in the primary grades and an educator of pre- and in-service teachers, I have become aware of the need for and importance of multicultural literature and curricula in American education. Children's literature, in particular, is a vehicle by which social injustices and discrimination might be explored in the classroom. And despite our insistence on declaring ourselves part of a post-racial society, the prevalence of discrimination and disenfranchisement of particular groups of people still weaves itself into the very fiber of American culture. According to Cochran-Smith, Davis, and Fries, 80-93% of students enrolled in collegiate education programs are White (2004). However, the population of students of color was 40% in 2002 and will continue to increase throughout the twenty-first century. At the same time, Whites represent 90% of public school teachers, another figure likely to increase (Howard, 2006). By 2035, children of color will constitute the statistical majority of the student population and will increase annually to an estimated 57% in 2050 (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004).

Racism continues to be a constant and volatile issue in American education. Literature has long been an escape from the realities of racism. Hazel Rochman (1993) explains, "A good book can help to break down these barriers. Books can help children to understand their own experiences, can validate their own culture, provide information about other cultures, encourage empathy and inspire imagination" (p.9). Books can also make a difference in dispelling prejudice and building a community; not with the role models and literal recipes or noble messages about the human family, but with enthralling

stories that make us imagine the lives of others. A good story lets you know people as individuals in all their particularity and conflict. And once you see someone as a person--flawed, complex, striving---you've reached beyond the stereotype. Acts of writing, telling, sharing, and transforming stories enrich and connect us and help us know each other (Temple et. al, 2002). Rochman (1993) explains, "multiculturalism means across cultures; multiculturalism doesn't mean only people of color" (p.9). The literature review and recommendations that follow explore possibilities of multicultural pedagogy in teacher education with a focus on African-American (AA) students and children's literature in elementary grades.

Review of Literature

There have been considerable changes in the availability and quality of literature written primarily for an audience AA children since Nancy Larrick wrote "The All-White World of Children's Books" in 1965. Regarded as groundbreaking at the time, Larrick's research exposed the lack of children's books written about and, even fewer, by minorities. Her work launched a publishing era that gave AA authors and illustrators access to the power of print and the opportunity to tell the stories of their heritages and cultures. The AA literature that has been published during this time may be used to help readers identify cultural heritages, understand social change, respect values of others, and expand their insights and imaginations. However, confronting sensitive issues like race and social class can be difficult, especially in the elementary classroom. Why? Multicultural educators have observed that research about race and literacy are often framed in the language of diversity, multicultural education, and culturally relevant education (Banks, 1994; Lee, 2007). White teachers are afforded the privilege of

engaging with multicultural education without ever having to acknowledge the ways that White people are the beneficiaries of inequality in society. Ladson-Billings (2003) pointed out that even when teachers use children's books that explicitly deal with matters of race and racism, they do not talk about race. Further, Hunter (2010) found that both Black and White pre-service teachers reported feeling uncomfortable discussing issues of race presented in AA children's literature with elementary students for whom they planned and implemented reading lessons.

Research shows that new teachers often abandon what they have learned during years of teacher preparation and revert to instructional practices they experienced themselves unless they are taught to be reflective, thoughtful, and critical. Kagan (1992) asserted that pre-service teachers carry beliefs about good teaching and students based on memories of their own schooling into their classrooms because these images are rarely challenged in teacher education programs. Many scholars stress the importance of education programs in which pre- and in-service teachers are taught Many scholars stress the importance of education programs in which pre- and in-service teachers are taught to analyze their own literacy histories (Bedard, Van Horn, & Garcia, 2011) and develop culturally sensitive lenses through which they can critically view the personal experiences, pedagogy, and ideology that ground their teaching and then reframe instruction based on the cultures and voices of their students (Lee, 1993; Spears-Bunton, 1990).

Teachers tend to use instructional practices that are consistent with their beliefs (Olson & Singer, 1994); therefore, teacher educators and pre- and in-service teachers must tackle rather than ignore their own personal beliefs and images as they confront

issues of race, racism, and privilege in AA literature. As Greene (1988) explained, literary texts chosen by informed teachers enable readers to “perceive their own illusions and stereotypes, even as they expose them to the multiple ways in which the world means to those inhabiting it” (p. 187). Ladson-Billings has carried forward Greene’s ideas in a body of work (1994, 1998, 2003, 2009) based on the premise that literature exposes readers to a wide range of thoughts and ideas and allows them to experience other lives vicariously to learn about human nature including their own. Her work suggests that intentional exposure, open discussion building critical discourse, and careful reflection about content and issues in AA children’s literature in teacher education courses can be catalysts for modifying the beliefs and images of pre- and in-service teachers and have a positive impact on the education of all the students they teach.

The Dreamkeepers Revisited

Ladson-Billings’ *The Dreamkeepers* was first published in 1994 and has been republished in a second edition almost two decades later (2009). The purpose of this study was to identify qualities of teachers who were capable of teaching Black students at high levels of effectiveness. Among the eight teachers in the original study there were many differences in teaching styles, but Ladson-Billings found that all took advantage of what she called transformative teaching moments. These teachers were able to improve educational outcomes for Black students by using their own and students’ experiences in transformative teaching that provided culturally relevant instruction. Ladson-Billings found that these teachers’ practices were characterized by features such as cooperative learning, use of multicultural materials, and concern and care for both students and their cultures. She concluded that culturally relevant teaching practices include:

“the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to fit the school culture to the students’ culture but also to use students’ culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge. Thus culturally relevant teaching requires the recognition of African-American culture as an important strength upon which to construct the schooling experience” (1994, p. 314).

In the context of culturally relevant teaching, the construction of literary knowledge is especially important to Black students. Interviewing a Black child ten years of age, Sims (1983) asked why AA children’s literature appealed to her, to which she replied that “books about Black girls” (p. 23) were the ones she liked best. Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) corroborated Sims’ findings and reported that AA readers enjoy reading books in which characters are similar to them and cultural experiences are familiar.

Children participating in interactive read alouds and reading independently or with guidance and instruction are constantly constructing meaning. According to Louise Rosenblatt (1994, 1995), all readers bring different personal and cultural experiences to the texts they read, assume different stances toward the text depending on purposes for reading, and understand the text through their own unique cultural and psychological filters. Building from Rosenblatt’s theories about readers, Bishop (1992) maintained that students who do not see their culture represented in the literature to which they are exposed are more likely to devalue their importance in society and in school.

Teachers must be able to use the students' cultural knowledge and experiences as foundations and supports for learning, and this can only be achieved by leveraging home knowledge with that of curriculum goals (Lee, 1993). AA children's literature provides a medium for engaging teachers and students in explorations of characters, events, actions, and consequences that are culturally relevant for Black students and an important part of the cultural heritage and body of knowledge that should be common to all students and teachers in elementary classrooms across the nation.

Then and Now

In *The Dreamkeepers*, Ladson-Billings (1994, 2009) identified commonalities among teachers that made them exceptionally effective in improving educational outcomes for Black students and derived tenets from her research that were worthy of consideration by teacher educators and reading teachers both then and now. These publications seem to have had little if any impact on the educative experiences and outcomes for Black students in American schools, however. In spite of the fact that Ladson-Billings provided guidelines for making teachers capable of reaching and teaching Black students very well almost 20 years ago, results from the National Assessments of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2011) from the 1970s until the most recent reveal a persistent, statistically significant achievement gap between White and Black students in reading and other areas.

Results from the NAEP provide nationally representative, continuing assessment data on American education results of subject-matter achievement across disciplines and populations. According to the latest results in reading for fourth graders (NAEP, 2011), the gap between White and Black students has diminished slightly since the 1970s, but

there still exists a significant 25-point score difference in reading between these ethnic groups. In addition, there was no change in average performance for either group or in the size of the reading achievement gap between White and Black students from 2009 to 2011.

Ladson-Billing's findings on exemplary teaching and its effect on academic performance of Black students that were published in 1994, again in 2009, and at other times in other sources (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2003) have increased our collective knowledge about the importance of culturally relevant teaching, but the NAEP (2011) results suggest that the influence of Ladson-Billings' work so far has been insufficient to begin closing the achievement gap. Black students still lag behind their White counterparts in reading and other academic areas in spite of the promising results and potential effects of culturally relevant, culturally sensitive teaching.

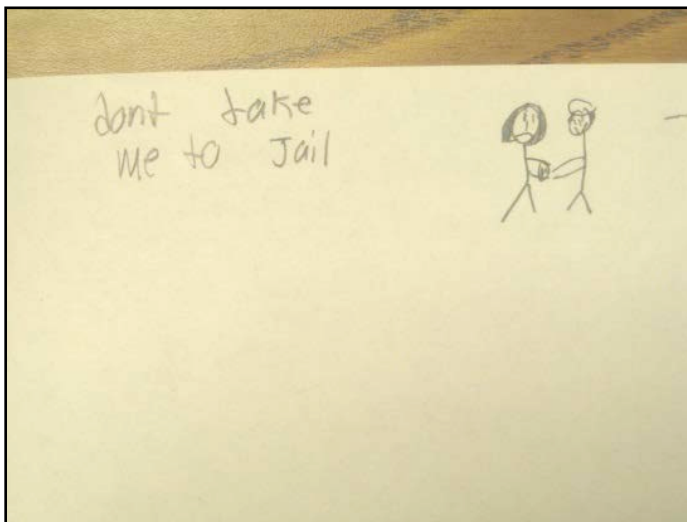
Classroom Experiences and Possibilities for Practices

As a teacher of children and a teacher educator, I have carried the findings published by Ladson-Billings (1994, 2009) in *The Dreamkeepers* into public school and university classrooms. I have facilitated many read-aloud sessions and guided reading lessons with racially mixed groups in which I invited students to comment on characters with whom they identified in conversational and written responses to texts such as *Rosa*, a picture book written by Nikki Giovanni and illustrated by Bryan Collier (2005). The book's narration, dialogue, and cut-paper images present unique perspectives and an exciting way for children to learn about Rosa Parks' courageous act of defiance that sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott in Alabama. While conducting this read aloud and follow-up activities with a group of second graders, I discovered that all of the students

understood the inequalities and injustices suffered by the characters in the story. These children recognized what many seasoned educators and pre-service teachers prefer to ignore, i.e., that education in the South continues to perpetuate the White privilege. Confronting inequity and challenging the status quo is often difficult for teachers and teacher educators, but these youngsters were unafraid to explore the historical events and social issues depicted in the book and apply them to their here and now.

The rest of this article presents three of the tenets derived by Ladson-Billings (1994, 2009) from the work she reported in *The Dreamkeepers*. The first two tenets are followed by student activities and work samples that show my attempts to incorporate AA literature into literacy instruction that parallels tenets for culturally sensitive instruction and to teach cultural and historical content as well as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visual literacy. The third tenet is followed by thoughts and insights about my role as an educator who is also a political being and an agent of change.

1. Teachers and students participate in a broad conception of literacy that incorporates both literature (text and illustrations) and oratory.



In addition to collaborative discussion about the text, students were also led in interactive drawing and oration or dialogue activities related to the text. This theatrical presentation, made in small groups of four to five students, is a learning and assessment technique that caters to those students who struggle with reading and writing. Students are expected to construct knowledge of characters' possible dialogue based on the text. For example, the teacher might ask the students to pretend they are the characters in the book and to come up with a drawing and dialogue for each. The drawing above shows the words recorded by one student as the dialogue. "Don't take me to jail" pleaded the character as an officer led her away. In activities such as these, children are able to engage and construct meaning from the literature using several different modes of literary learning that involve reading, writing, listening, speaking, and visualization to produce their own drawings and oration.

2. Teachers and students engage in a collective struggle against the status quo.

As the students and I participated in a literary discussion, many questions arose about the fairness of laws that allowed persons of color using public transportation to be subjected to taking seats in the back of the bus or standing to give White passengers places to sit. After these conversations, I engaged students in an activity called an open-mind portrait, which is designed to help students think more deeply about a character and relive the story from the character's point of view. I asked students to reflect on how Rosa Parks may have felt as a Black woman during this period, and their portraits showed that they were able to connect with Rosa's emotions and feelings. In the blue text bubble next to the portrait above, students responded that Rosa was thinking "That segregation is

wrong” and demonstrated their vicarious engagement in Rosa’s struggle against the status quo.



3. Teachers are cognizant of themselves as political beings.

As an educator of future teachers working with elementary students, I am constantly re-evaluating my perceptions of literary materials. The cultural politics of literacy are prevalent, although hidden, and impact the young minds we are entrusted with shaping. Additionally, pre-service teachers need opportunities to engage in conversations about race and culture during their undergraduate studies so that they might be aware of the possible educational, philosophical, and cultural deposits they are capable of making in the minds and lives of young learners. My task, as both a researcher and teacher educator, is to prepare my students, who are largely White female future teachers, for the diversity and multiculturalism they will confront upon entering the profession. It is the responsibility of teacher educators to help these eager, unassuming, and inexperienced future professionals understand and unpack the knapsacks of privilege they carry. If they are equipped with knowledge of the prevalent role that race and culture play

within the context of literary experiences aimed at educating children, future teachers will be able to carry out instruction in classrooms where diversity is celebrated, issues of inequality are confronted, and all students are effectively educated in ways that are culturally sensitive and relevant.

Reflection and Conclusion

As I reflected on Ladson-Billings's *The Dreamkeepers* (1994, 2009), I was struck by the crucial role that my work as a teacher educator and my students' work in classrooms can play in the education of generations of school children. As history continues to shape itself, its record and portrayal in print, on television, and in the memories of those who lived it are no less distorted today than they will be 50 years from now. Rosa Parks' portrayal as a tired seamstress rather than a lifelong community activist is a distortion that will be maintained across generations unless we prepare teachers who are able to think critically and teach their students to do the same. Literacy is a dynamic collection of interactive processes that are constantly redefined and renegotiated based on socio-cultural influences. We are not simply preparing students to be *readers*. Rather, we are preparing reflective, evaluative, critical thinkers who construct knowledge by reading literature representing many cultures and presented in countless innovative informational media that change continuously. While the challenge is daunting, it is not impossible. Our futures depend on our commitment to the preparation of culturally competent educators who are able to boldly face the challenges of creating multicultural classrooms and curricula that reflect and respect the lives and experiences of the students they teach.

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