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On June 14, 1998, Luke Baldwin passed away. He was 47 years old. He leaves his wife, Corinne, and his children, Wilson and Olivia. His death was unexpected and it is still very hard to accept that he is no longer with us.

At the time of his death, Luke was Lesley College's Interim Provost. During his 15 years at Lesley College, he served as a member of the faculty and administrator. As an academic, Luke examined areas such as adult education and reading. He co-authored "The Reading Crisis: Why Poor Children Fall Behind," published by Harvard University Press in 1990. Both his master's degree and doctorate were earned in the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University.

Luke was a musician, singer, and songwriter, as well as a social activist guided by an unbreakable commitment to social justice. At Lesley College he worked hard on issues of diversity and community service. He had a great sense of humor and a passion for colorful shirts.

In 1996, Luke played a major role in the establishment of the Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice. From the very beginning he was an active member of our Editorial Board. Much is owed to him for his efforts in getting financial support for JPPP, and for his many hours reading and editing submissions. In this issue we publish his last article, with Linda Brion-Meisels, “Fostering Gumption: Helping Community Service Learning Interns Integrate Their Personal, Professional and Political Selves.”

Introduction: The Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism & Practice
Pablo Navarro

The Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice is a refereed journal published by Lesley College focusing on cultural criticism and on pluralistic approaches to learning and teaching throughout the life span. This includes learning in classrooms, in organizations, and in informal settings. The editorial board seeks to present a balance of practitioner-research, philosophical essays, systematic theoretical research, literature, and the visual arts to showcase interdisciplinary lenses for diverse forms of education.

The Journal offers a highly accessible medium to disseminate scholarship in the areas of Education, Human Services, Management, Social and the Natural Sciences within the unifying themes of pedagogy, pluralism, and practice. Each issue will be published on the World Wide Web to grant easy access for Lesley off-campus students, alumni, and the greater professional community. Articles will be submitted to ERIC, and appropriate listings will be provided for World Wide Web search engines.

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Invitation to Submit Manuscripts

All contributions for the Fall 1999 issue of the Journal should be sent to the co-editors by electronic mail, addressed to Pablo Navarro: <pnavarro@mail.lesley.edu>. Attachments to e-mail should be provided in text-only (ASCII text) formats. The deadline for submissions for the Fall issue is May 1, 1997.

Generally articles should not exceed 3000 words and should conform to the simplest versions of the stylistic conventions of either the Modern Language Association or the American Psychological Association. Authors who wish to submit manuscripts that are longer or in different formats should first contact the editor, Pablo Navarro for further guidelines.

The Journal is interested in directly addressing linguistic pluralism by publishing articles in other languages. Authors who can submit two versions of their article, one in English and one in another language, are encouraged to do so.

Each issue will include one or two invited articles. All other manuscripts are selected through a blind, peer review process. The Journal publishes previously unpublished materials only.
Fostering Gumption: Helping Community Service Learning Interns Integrate Their Personal, Professional and Political Selves

Luke Baldwin and Linda Brion-Meisels

Gumption is the psychic gasoline that keeps the whole thing going. If you haven't got it there's no way the motorcycle can possibly be fixed. But if you have got it and know how to keep it there's absolutely no way in this whole world the motorcycle can keep from getting fixed...Therefore the thing that must be monitored at all times and preserved before anything else is the gumption. (Pirsig, 1974, p. 273)

Introduction

Our experiences of working in the area of peace education with undergraduate college women has emphasized to us the differences in initial perspectives about this topic between us and the students with whom we are working. We enter the situation with the need to help students identify and balance the many competing forces in our society; students arrive expecting us to teach them a curriculum that will solve the problem of violence in our communities. And, thus, it became clear to us quite quickly that our primary goal would be to complicate students' thinking (see Diane Levin, 1994). Complicate it too much, and they turn away - frustrated by being pushed beyond their ability to understand the expectations or the explanations. Complicate it too little, and students fail to incorporate the multiple perspectives that are so vital a part of peaceful communities. Community Service Learning (CSL) is a pedagogy based on an agreement to explore multiple perspectives and to value each participant as a resource, as well as a recipient. It is a result of changes in our professional and political lenses which now view "experts" as only one piece of the puzzle—both in terms of identifying the problems as well as solving them.

The purpose of this paper is to share our experiences (see Note 1) working with traditional-aged, undergraduate women who elected to do community service in the area of violence-prevention and peace-making. We tried to accomplish three tasks, which we describe in this paper: 1) We attempted to help the women to become skilled at identifying the complexities of engaging in community service learning. The roles across service provider and service recipient are blurred in a strong community service learning program. And the multiple levels of functioning that exist for the CSL intern are complex, often conflicting pieces of who we are. 2) We attempted to establish a
supportive environment and build in course tasks that helped the CSL interns process their experiences of these complexities in a broad range of ways, including activities that did not rely solely on a verbal account and analysis but relied on connected, non-verbal ways of knowing and learning. Women's Ways of Knowing (Belenky, et al., 1986) and Gardner's (1983/1993) Theory of Multiple Intelligence offered us a broad set of lenses for considering how students "think", and how they might process their experiences in this course. 3) We wanted to encourage and support the women in learning to live with the ambiguity of their reflections, to view complexity as a challenge and their need for greater integration of beliefs and behaviors as an achievable, long-term goal. All three of these tasks seem essential if students are to work with communities in ways that move beyond missionary-like service to reciprocal learning relationships that create action for social justice.

In our community service learning course on violence prevention and peace-making, we tried to accomplish these tasks by connecting three levels of thought and action: personal, professional, and political. We asked students to reflect upon themselves as individuals (the personal), as practitioners (the professional), as citizens (the political) in our society. We began with the assumption that to know and accept oneself is a prerequisite for knowing and accepting others. Then, we asked students to explore the interfaces of these three levels of functioning. We encouraged them to make connections among these three roles, emphasizing our belief that these levels are not concentric circles which radiate merely out from the individual; they are overlapping circles which intersect and interact together during any particular point in time.

Making connections among the personal, the professional, and the political is difficult work - for any of us, at any point in time. It is the central task of learning to "walk the talk" - to translate learning, whether theoretical or experiential, into action. In each of these domains, many of us in the current U.S. cultural context seek consistency among what we believe, what we espouse, and how we act. For example, we might espouse that all children deserve an effective education, though we believe that we must ensure excellence for our own children and, thereby, we act to maintain a system where some students get more resources than others. We can see here the conflict between the belief system and the espoused values. These tensions create the pain we feel with the acknowledgment that we can't work towards meeting the needs of society as a whole while still maintaining the status quo for most of us who benefit from the social injustices currently existing in society. And so, it is not surprising that our students often find these connections difficult to recognize, and very difficult to integrate.

Many of the young women with whom we work come to Lesley College because they know that they want to work with children. Most of these women have decided that they will become teachers long before they arrive at Lesley. Certainly, all of them choose Lesley College because it is a school that educates for "people professions." At the same
time, most of these young women do not see themselves as political activists. They prepare to move from the personal to the professional; they are not prepared to understand the power that their attitudes and behaviors have in influencing our political or societal values as a whole. Of course, they want to teach children to be caring, productive citizens. They do not see themselves as being politically active in their roles as teachers. However, this initial experience of relating personal experiences to political and social views seems to have expanded their process of gaining skill in hearing and understanding multiple voices and perspectives. Interpersonal perspective-taking and dialectical thought are "habits of mind" that seem to build a commitment to the common good (Daloz, et al, 1996, p. 108), and dealing with multiple voices and contradictions was inherent in our students' process of understanding.

When we first began to teach this course, we found that some students actually resented being asked to talk about themselves personally when their reason for taking a course such as this one was, ostensibly, to learn about specific violence prevention curricula and various pedagogical strategies in peace-making. With experience, however, we learned to be clearer in communicating, through the course description, that self-reflection is part of this experience.

Students who really are not ready for this work generally opt out. Others are prepared to deal with their own apprehensions and understand the expectations of the course. Recognizing these anxieties, we attempted to create a safe "holding environment," allowing them to grieve the loss of old beliefs in the process of constructing new sociopolitical perspectives (Kegan, 1982). Taking new perspectives requires acknowledging complexities that may have gone unnoticed in the past and promotes movement to a transition away from the "received knowing" (Belenky, et al, 1986) implicit in the "just teach me the skills" attitude that many students expressed.

The Course

The course, Changing the Culture of Violence: A Course in Community Service Learning, is an undergraduate course which can serve as professional pre-practica hours for students in education or human services. This course exemplifies community service learning for several reasons: 1) students are in community internships to work on issues connected to social justice; 2) they are trained for the work they do there; and 3) they spend regular reflection time, individually and as a group, integrating their classroom work and readings with their understandings of what they are learning through their internship experience. Students are asked to write a weekly reflection paper in which they try to make connections among the personal, the professional, and the political.

When these three levels of functioning are presented as concentric circles, students are able to understand and relate to them quite well. They understand the need to start with
oneself and to move outward.

[Appendix A]
We start with a study of our selves-who we are in terms of our 5 Cs (Johnson, 1996): color, culture, class, character, context. We move from ourselves to others, from the personal to the professional (understanding and accepting those with whom we work), to the political (understanding and relating humanistically to society as a whole). Certainly, all of us understand how our communities move outward from our immediate families to our neighborhoods, then our cities, or other associational communities. The real tensions are created when we start to push students to understand how the actions at one level of functioning do, in fact, affect the other levels of functioning.

[Appendix B]
Examples of Negotiating Personal, Professional, and Political Roles: Am I the teacher or do I align myself with the students?

Professional Role: Identification/Responsibilities of an Adult Personal Experience: Identification/Empathy with the Children/Youth

Tension between our personal and professional selves has been addressed by practicum supervisors for years, both in education and human services. On a personal level, CSL interns, as inexperienced group leaders, may feel an anxiety concerning their ability to really carry out the activity. This anxiety often leads to a need for control as they try to identify with the mentor teacher's ability to be responsible for a group of children. On a more theoretical level, what we might label as "professional" functioning, the young practitioner is, however, committed to giving the children a voice. The identification that young practitioners have with their students forces them into the tensions created by competing needs-the need to be in control of the group, and the need to allow the individuals in the group to have some power themselves. This time of transition in teacher training, from student to teacher, is a difficult time-when one can empathize with both positions, both sets of needs, and still find it very difficult to integrate these needs into a win-win solution. As a student told Robert Coles (1993): "I talk myself blue in the face, but in the middle I can see them tuning out on me." (p. 42) This situation generalizes to most community service roles in which adolescents or young adults find themselves torn between taking the adult role in an authoritarian manner versus putting themselves in the peer role as a "friend" to the students with whom they are working.

Professional Goals: Teaching Conflict Resolution Strategies Can I practice what I preach?

Personal Needs: Difficulty Using Conflict Resolution Strategies in One's Own Life
In this particular CSL experience, students worked in teams when they went to their placements. Here again, we saw students in dilemmas as they attempted to facilitate negotiation strategies among elementary school-aged children at the CSL sites, while often having major difficulties negotiating among themselves as they planned their lessons. Students compartmentalized by planning together the ground rules for their sites while not operating with clear ground rules themselves. Like any group, CSL interns need training and practice in working in cooperative or collaborative learning groups. Most students attempted to set up ground rules among themselves when they first began planning how to present their CSL peace-making activities. Those groups that had difficulty tended to take this ostensible group planning session and make it a series of individual activities. Each group member would choose specific activities to present and the rest of the group would agree to let her lead that activity on her own. This solution, though it allowed for continued group cohesiveness on a minimal level, did not move the CSL interns into the type of successful negotiation they were simultaneously trying to facilitate among the children at their CSL sites. However, it should also be recognized that re-entry adult women also experience similar difficulties in moving to more collaborative modes of learning (Taylor & Marieneau, 1995, p. 11).

**Political Position: The Politics of Social Justice Personal Position: Based on the Competitive Value System of our Culture**

**Is it win-win or winner-take-all?**

The tension between the personal and the political roles were the most difficult for the students to recognize and address. They seemed much more difficult to deal with than the personal-professional conflicts. We believe that this interface is the most difficult for all of us who work within the peace movement. How do we really "walk the talk?" For example, students were able to understand the danger of revenge as a catalyst for much violence in our world-locally as well as nationally and internationally. At the same time, we-as humans-are often unable to successfully find an alternative for revenge when dealing with our own anger. Similarly, most of the students came from rather traditional homes where competition is seen as a necessary and advantageous aspect of our society, though in this course students also agreed with much of what they read about the role of competition in the politics of social injustice in our society (Kohn, 1992). In our society, the tension between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group is one which we do not easily resolve. Usually, we seem to have resolved this tension by denying the interface between our personal and political selves and prioritizing the needs of the individual.

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that many young women have not received the kinds of social (Gilligan, 1982) or educational (Belenky, et al, 1986; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hammer, 1990) support they need to feel they have either the strength...
of voice or the power of agency necessary to achieve social change. Yet, there is little
doubt that they frequently have a strong sense of caring about the well-being of others.
Daloz, et al (1996) have observed the importance of "finding work in the world" as a
means of strengthening compassion for others by understanding and valuing difference.
This underscores the importance of the kind of experience students were introduced to in
our CSL course. Although epistemological development is a slow process, and students
struggled to articulate personal reflections on their experiences, they still marshaled the
courage to go into new and different settings to teach skills that they were just learning
themselves. Therefore, even if we did not succeed in helping students achieve dramatic
developmental transitions, we did succeed in providing sufficient support for them to
have the gumption to take new risks. As Pirsig (1974) has observed: "The gumption-
filling process occurs when one is quiet long enough to see and hear and feel the real
universe, not just one's stale opinions about it. But it's nothing exotic. That's why I like
the word." (p. 273) Our students may not have achieved anything exotic, but they did
foster gumption. They attempted to act on a sense of caring, even if personal reflection to
achieve a sense of agency was difficult.

Learning to Live with Ambiguity

One of the identifying features of a good CSL experience is its ability to offer the
opportunity for reflection on and integration of the CSL experience. Typically, this
reflection is accomplished in a process seminar. This seminar is designed to offer
students the opportunity to understand and speak about the contradictory messages
among their personal, professional, and political levels of functioning-to work to better
integrate their beliefs with their behaviors, their personal goals with the needs of the
others at their service site. However, we found that our students began feeling
increasingly stressed by this part of their weekly course. Students seemed to relax more
during the theoretical part of the course where readings were discussed and sometimes
information was presented didactically than they did during that part of the course where
they dealt with their own behavior and concerns.

Constructivists (Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996; Duckworth, 1996; Kegan 1982) often
recognize the need for creating an "optimal mismatch" in supporting new thinking in
students. Challenging students with a situation which causes them to question their
current thinking can promote understanding of the world in increasingly more complex
ways. Yet, facilitators must avoid confronting students with teacher-centered analyses
that are far beyond their level of experience and theoretical grasp.. This only causes
students to shut down and embed themselves in the safety of their current thinking.

Finding the "optimal mismatch", the "optimal challenge" for students is based on both
their developmental position and the number of variables we ask students to balance at
once. For example, a CSL intern who is in personal-professional tension between the
personal need to lesson one's anxiety about succeeding-leading to a tendency to act in a
punitive manner so that things don't get "out of control"-and the professional commitment to win-win situations and group problem-solving. If we were to raise this issue of "letting go" before the intern felt self-assured enough to consider this option, the student might likely decide that student-centered approaches are too high risk or "peaceable classrooms" are not long for the real world. Instead, we offer the intern the challenge to engage the students in determining group expectations and rules when the student feels comfortable with the content and procedure of the activity and ready to accept this challenge concerned with behavior management.

When we asked students to identify the tasks they wished to accomplish during the seminar part of the course, they came up with several purposes-only one of which was better self-awareness, or what we would have considered reflective practice. In addition, students felt that this open-ended time was very important in terms of: 1) offering support (without an in depth look at the problems), 2) offering an opportunity to problem-solve through peer suggestions (rather than working on problem-solving strategies oneself), and 3) offering an opportunity to let off steam, a place to express one's feelings (without generating solutions).

In an attempt to better tolerate the level of intensity created by examining the contradictory and/or conflicting roles identified in the course, we looked to Gardner's (1983/1993) Theory of Multiple Intelligence to help us offer students new ways to think about their experiences without necessarily processing the material in a typical linguistic fashion which identifies the problem and seeks immediately to determine a solution. We tried to move away from painful soul-searching for resolution of what we recognized as conflicts across the three levels of functioning. Instead, we tried to help students feel more comfortable living with these ambiguities by offering them a variety of ways to express the tension they experienced.

As Coles (1993) has noted, new group leaders are often caught between the personal and professional issues of behavior management. It might be that an intern needs to learn to tolerate sitting with a set of conflicting goals-one to ensure an orderly classroom oneself and the other to engage the students in sharing the responsibility for determining "order". Sometimes resolution that is forced too quickly isn't really resolution at all, but a clever way to avoid the issue at hand. Therefore, at times we encouraged students to abstain from problem-solving and to focus only on an accurate description of the situation facing them. Students made drawings or designs, engaged in role plays, worked with metaphor, or tried movement as expression-all diverse routes to the seeing, hearing, and feeling that are part of the gumption-filling process.

More time needed to be spent honoring those experiences that students could clearly see as successful and helping them identify their own strengths. More time needed to be allowed for students to analyze their experiences without the pressure of always understanding more. We needed to slow down and remember that integrating one's
various roles is a life-long process, not something that needs to be completed during one course or one CSL experience.

We looked for ways to help maintain a balance of a sense of competence with challenge, an "optimal mismatch" of ideas that keeps moving students forward in their thinking, while not exhausting them. While we continued to encourage students to acknowledge the internal conflicts they encountered, we tried to offer them the support and safety they required to have the courage to acknowledge what they experienced that they did not understand.

Identifying Models to Help Paint the Long-Range Paths to be Taken

One strategy we used to help with the challenge for self-reflection involved asking students to identify a peace-maker of their own choosing and to study the works written by that individual. We asked students to pick someone from their own field, someone whom they admired and wanted to emulate. Through study of that person, students can better understand some of the struggles that a peace-maker faces in integrating the personal, professional, and political aspects of their character. We wanted the students to consider the sources of their peace-makers' commitments, how their peace-makers sustained themselves in this work, how their peace-makers coped with the complexity of "walking the talk," not merely as a political figure or a professional figure, but across all three levels of functioning in their lives.

Most students left this course feeling that their work had just begun. Some really felt they needed a break from their own self-reflection. Others felt a new sense of balance at having considered some things they had not previously considered in terms of their own values and goals. As faculty, we, too, recognized the need to identify the gains made as well as the need to feel at peace with the work yet to be done. We emphasized the need to find self-esteem in one's willingness to recognize new issues without necessarily being able to immediately resolve conflicting ideas. We tried to help students find value in the process of the journey, rather than the security of "having arrived." A colleague reminded me of the importance of seeing this work as a life-long journey in which we progress by taking small steps. There is a lovely story by Loren Eisley that we heard only after our last class session, but which we plan to share with future groups of students:

A young person walked along the beach picking up starfish and throwing them back into the water. It was a warm, lovely day which followed a violent night, and the entire beach was covered with starfish who had been washed on shore the night before during the storm. A couple came along and saw the young person throwing the starfish back, one at a time. "Why are you doing that?" they asked of the young person. "You will never be able to throw all these starfish back into the water in time. There is no way you will be able to save all of them. What does it matter if you manage to throw back this one or that
one?"
"That is true. But," said the person as one particular starfish was lifted up and positioned to be tossed, "it matters to this starfish." And with that, the person threw the starfish back into the water.

**Conclusions**

As we reflect on what we have learned about ourselves and our students through the CSL course, it has been difficult to achieve an optimal balance among critical self-evaluation, high expectations for students, and recognition of positive accomplishments. There are many ways in which this experience illustrates the recent transposition in pedagogical jargon that is embodied in the phrase: learning and teaching. Just as we expect students to develop a sense of reciprocity in their placements, we need to promote and embrace the same sense of reciprocity in our teaching. We hold onto our aspirations for these students to strengthen their own voices through personal reflection and experiential learning; we have not abandoned our faith in their abilities to perceive social needs and political injustice; we still believe that we have planted the seeds that will grow into a stronger sense of self and foster the gumption it takes to be an agent for social change for the common good.

Where we succeeded the most was in fostering gumption, and we need to validate that in our practice as instructors. The students' struggles with personal reflection seem to be part of the process nurturing the emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) that will contribute to the transition to a new sense of self (Kegan, 1982; Belenky, et al, 1986). Yet, this is a slow process, and there is an enduring tension in balancing the demands for support and challenge (Daloz, 1986). While we see the need to continue to push for reflective practice, we recognize the need to embrace "how far we can help them learn," rather than how fast we can make them learn (Duckworth, 1986). No doubt, we need to continue to provide personal, professional, and political challenges. At the same time we need to embrace and nurture the gumption-filling process so that students become intrinsically compelled to work for social justice.

**Notes**

1. The course described in this essay was taught by Linda Brion-Meisels and Barrie Wheeler, and Luke Baldwin consulted with them in analyzing their reflections. Brion-Meisels and Baldwin are the primary authors of this article.
References


Dawson, Eric. (1996) This story was told by Eric Dawson, Director of Peace Games International, at the Peace Action Awards Dinner, May, 1996.


Rossell and Baker: Their Case for the Effectiveness of Bilingual Education

Jim Cummins, University of Toronto

In 1996, Christine Rossell and Keith Baker published a review of research studies which they claimed addressed the effectiveness of bilingual education (Rossell & Baker, 1996). Their findings looked impressive and are frequently cited by opponents of bilingual education. For example, they claimed that in ten studies comparing transitional bilingual education (TBE) with Structured Immersion in reading performance, no difference was found in 17% and Structured Immersion was superior in 83%. However, when we look at these research studies more closely, it turns out that 90% actually demonstrate the effectiveness of bilingual and even trilingual education.

Seven of the ten studies which Rossell and Baker claim support structured immersion over TBE were studies of French immersion programs in Canada. Typically, in these programs English-speaking students are "immersed" in French (their second language [L2]) in kindergarten and grade 1 and English (L1) language arts are introduced in grade 2. The proportion of English instruction increases to about 50% by grade 5. The closest equivalent to the program in the United States is dual language immersion which has repeatedly demonstrated its effectiveness for both majority and minority language students (e.g. Christian et al., 1997; Dolson & Lindholm, 1995). Note that, as in the U.S. dual language programs, Canadian French immersion programs are bilingual programs, taught by bilingual teachers, and their goal is the development of bilingualism and biliteracy.

In evaluations of these programs, immersion students' performance in French and English was usually compared to that of native French-speaking students (in French) and native-English-speaking students (in English) who were attending monolingual French or English programs. In some cases, comparisons were made with students in less intensive forms of "partial immersion." These programs involved 50% instruction in each language. Rossell and Baker label these programs as "transitional bilingual education" despite the fact that they involve no transition from one language to another and are intended for majority language students rather than minority language students.

In addition to these seven French immersion program evaluations, one of the ten studies (Malherbe, 1946) was an extremely large-scale study of Afrikaans-English bilingual education in South Africa involving 19,000 students. The other two were carried out in the United States (Gersten, 1985; Pena-Hughes & Solis, 1980).
The Pena-Hughes and Solis program (labelled "structured immersion" by Rossell and Baker) involved an hour of Spanish language arts per day and was viewed as a form of bilingual education by the director of the program (Willig, 1981/82). I would see the genuine promotion of L1 literacy in this program as indicating a much more adequate model of bilingual education than the quick-exit transitional bilingual program to which it was being compared. Gersten's study involved an extremely small number of Asian-origin students (12 immersion students in the first cohort and nine bilingual program students, and 16 and seven in the second cohort) and hardly constitutes an adequate sample upon which to base national policy.

Malherbe's study concluded that students instructed bilingually did at least as well in each language as students instructed monolingually despite much less time through each language. He argues strongly for the benefits of bilingual education.

So we come to the seven Canadian French immersion programs. It seems incongruous that Rossell and Baker use the success of such bilingual programs to argue for monolingual immersion programs taught largely by monolingual teachers with the goal of developing monolingualism. This is particularly the case since two of the seven programs they cite as evidence for monolingual structured immersion were actually trilingual programs involving instruction in French, English, and Hebrew! The logic here is that we should implement monolingual programs on the basis of research demonstrating the effectiveness of trilingual programs.

More bizarre, however, is the fact that their account of the outcomes of French immersion programs is erroneous in the extreme. Consider the following quotation:

"Both the middle class and working class English-speaking students who were immersed in French in kindergarten and grade one were almost the equal of native French-speaking students until the curriculum became bilingual in grade two, at which point their French ability declined and continued to decline as English was increased." (p. 22)

Rossell and Baker seem oblivious to the fact that at the end of grade one French immersion students are still at very early stages in their acquisition of French. Despite good progress in learning French (particularly receptive skills) during the initial two years of the program, they are still far from native-like in virtually all aspects of proficiency -- speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Most grade 1 and 2 French immersion students are still incapable of carrying on even an elementary conversation in French without major errors and insertions of English.

Similarly, it is ludicrous to claim, as Baker and Rossell do, that the French proficiency of grade 6 immersion students is more poorly developed than that of grade 1 students, and to attribute this to the fact that L1 instruction has been incorporated in the program. Significantly, Rossell and Baker cite no specific study to back up these claims.
The validity of the claims can be assessed from Swain and Lapkin's (1982) overview of the French immersion research conducted in Ontario which reported that students at the grade 1 and 2 level "were scoring as well as about one-third of native French-speaking students in Montreal, and by grade 6 as well as one-half of the Montreal comparison group." (pp. 41-42). These data refer to performance on a standardized achievement measure; Swain and Lapkin point out that there are major differences at all grade levels in the productive skills of speaking and writing.

Lambert and Tucker (1972) similarly report highly significant differences between grade 1 immersion and native French-speaking students on a variety of vocabulary, grammatical and expressive skills in French, despite the fact that no differences were found in some of the sub-skills of reading such as word discrimination. By the end of grade four, however, (after 3 years of English [L1] language arts instruction), the immersion students had caught up with the French controls in vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension, although major differences still remained in speaking ability.

To claim that two years of immersion in French in kindergarten and grade 1 results in almost native-like proficiency in French in a context where there is virtually no French exposure in the environment or in school outside the classroom flies in the face of a massive amount of research data. This can be verified by anyone who cares to step into any of the thousands of grade 1 French immersion classrooms across Canada.

In short, the French immersion data are the opposite of what Rossell and Baker claim. There are very significant differences between the immersion students and native French-speaking controls at the end of grade 1 (after two years of monolingual total immersion) but the immersion students catch up in French listening and reading in the later grades of elementary school after the program becomes bilingual (and obviously after they have had several more years of learning French!).

Rossell and Baker's discussion of the French immersion data is presumably meant to imply that two years of "structured immersion" in English should be sufficient for limited English proficient students to come close to grade norms in English. The fact that the one large-scale "methodologically acceptable" study that investigated this issue (Ramirez, 1992) found that early-grade students in "structured immersion" were very far from grade norms in English even after four years of immersion does not seem to disturb them. Recently released large-scale data from the Los Angeles Unified School District also show grade 5 Latino students who had spent their elementary school years in monolingual structured immersion performing well below similar students who participated consistently in bilingual programs in Reading, Language, and Math (Los Angeles Unified School District, 1998).
The significance of these points is that the empirical basis of Rossell and Baker's entire argument rests, according to their own admission, on the performance in French of English-background students in the first two years of Canadian French immersion programs. Not only are a large majority of the programs they cite as evidence for "structured immersion" Canadian French immersion programs, but Rossell (1996) (in response to critiques from Kathy Escamilla and Susan Dicker) suggests that:

"In the first two years, the program is one of total immersion, and evaluations conducted at that point are considered to be evaluations of 'structured immersion.' It is really not important that, in later years, the program becomes bilingual if the evaluation is being conducted while it is still and always has been a structured immersion program" (1996, p. 383)

Rossell and Baker's argument thus rests on their claim that students in monolingual "structured immersion" programs (Canadian French immersion programs in kindergarten and grade 1) come close to grade norms while the program is monolingual in L2 but lose ground in comparison to native speakers when the program becomes bilingual in later grades. As we have seen, the data show exactly the opposite: there are major gaps between immersion students and native French speakers after the initial two years of monolingual L2 instruction but students catch up with native speakers in receptive skills after instruction in their L1 (English) is introduced and the program has become fully bilingual. Based on their own premises and interpretation of the data, it is clear that Rossell and Baker should be arguing for bilingual instruction rather than against it. This is particularly the case in view of the fact that among their list of "methodologically acceptable" studies are several that demonstrate the superiority of programs that provide strong sustained L1 literacy instruction in addition to literacy instruction in English (El Paso Unified School District, 1987, 1992; Legaretta, 1979; Pena-Hughes & Solis, 1980).

Here is what Keith Baker said about the El Paso program evaluation (in a strong critique of Rosalie Pedalino Porter's book Forked Tongue):

"She summarizes a report from El Paso (1987) as finding that an all-English immersion program was superior to bilingual education programs. The El Paso report has no such finding. What Porter describes as an all-English immersion program in El Paso is, in fact, a Spanish-English dual immersion program. The El Paso study supports the claims of bilingual education advocates that most bilingual education programs do not use enough of the native language. It does not support Porter's claims that they should use less." (1992, p. 6).

In summary, drawing on "methodologically acceptable" research studies carried out in Canada, the United States, and South Africa, Rossell and Baker demonstrate that bilingual (and trilingual) programs succeed extremely well in developing strong literacy skills in both languages. They show a 90% effectiveness rate for programs that aim to develop strong bilingual and biliteracy skills in comparison to monolingual programs or
bilingual programs that aim to eradicate students' first language.

Note:
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References


Stories From The Other Side of the Screen: Identifying Social Construction Within Educational Software

Brenda G. Matthis

Description

Educational software programs are teachers, providing social construction with the lesson. How do we evaluate them? This is an excerpt from a Qualifying Paper Research at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which included graphics screen images and detailed descriptions of narratives from mathematics software. This paper is available through the Monroe Gutman Library at Harvard University.

Abstract

Designers of software programs provide their narratives, perspectives, and points of view through the software programs they develop, consciously and explicitly or not. As the providers of these narratives, the software designers are considered the authors of this medium. These authors' narratives contribute to the social construction of the users of the software as they gain cognitive instruction and entertainment. This is especially important to consider when it comes to educational software used by children in the classroom and in the home. The traditional process for the examination of narrative and content in a medium is a review. Narratives in software should be examined as other media, such as books, film, and music, are examined for their narratives -- but they are not. Assessments of current software review publications find their reviews of narrative incomplete or non-existent. Reviews of narratives are crucial in understanding the social construction children possibly could absorb from that software. Educators and parents are encouraged to design and use their own review criteria in selecting educational software for their classroom and children.

There Are People Behind the Software

The concept that the narrative of the author is present in a medium has long been an accepted understanding. The narrative of media provides the audience with an indication of the social norms, rules, and understandings that together build a social construction. The audience experiences the information, learning, and entertainment of the media, and the social construction that is bonded to the information is also learned. We experience this phenomenon when we read books, listen to music, and view film. When reading Cat On A Hot Tin Roof, we are aware that the author Tennessee Williams is male, and if we
read the jacket cover or the novelist's brief biography in the book, we learn he is from the American South, lived in the period of the early 20th century, and other profile information. This knowledge of the author provides some understanding of his perspective and background, which can provide clarity to the story and to the reasons why the characters and story line follow a particular path. When listening to Mozart, we are aware of the culture, period, and musical influences that together provide a profile and perspective of this composer and the impact they had on his music. In the case of film, the director is considered the author or auteur of the film although a team or crew of cinematographers, editors, and other film professionals have creative input. For example, Woody Allen is the author of his films despite the editors and other writers involved. His background as a New Yorker, Jew, and a neurotic is a self-acknowledged and well-documented point of view of his films; the audience is aware of the impact his profile has on his films.

There is an author in software programs, too. Authorship, commonly considered an issue of ownership, is defined in this discussion as "[T]he occupation or career of writing books, articles, etc. ... origin of work, esp. with reference to an author, creator, producer, etc." (Random House College Dictionary, 1984, p. 91). The authors of computer programs are software designers, developers, and engineers, and as authors they have narratives.

**What is Story from the Other Side of the Screen?**

The entire software program is within the context of the author's narrative; i.e., the author's points of reference and ideas of what should appear on the screen, actions that are allowed by the program and the user of the program, characterizations that appear in the program, and the logic of the program, are at the design discretion of the software designer. These and many other components of the author's narrative together provide a social construction that is available to the user of the program along with the cognitive instruction. In his study of children who play Nintendo, Provenzo (1991) found that children begin to identify with the interpretations and reasonings of the storylines in the games as they played the game. In addition, if the game is engaging enough, the children will overlook interpretations of the story and characters so that they can continue to play the game. Once that connection is made, the child is in relationship with the software and, if the software remains engaging, the social construction provided will be acceptable software program (Malone in Provenzo, 1991), the most common being characterizations of the agents, and the logic and decisions allowed in the software.

These engagement strategies are successful. Children react strongly to character representations with whom they can identify and the actions they are allowed to take in software. In his study of children who play Nintendo video games, Provenzo found that children identify closely with the characters provided in the video games, and began to act out the software program (Malone in Provenzo, 1991), the most common being...
characterizations of the agents, and the logic and decisions allowed in the software.

These engagement strategies are successful. Children react strongly to character representations with whom they can identify and the actions they are allowed to take in software. In his study of children who play Nintendo video games, Provenzo found that children identify closely with the characters provided in the video games, and began to act out those characterizations.

There are three major design features that are affected by the software's authors and very important in the engagement of the children to that software: characterizations by gender (Provenzo, 1991), ethnicity (Mander, 1991), and circumscription of the logic (Matthis, 1996) in the software. These design features are defined here as follows:

Gender is defined as male, female, or neither which would describe a character whose appearance seems gender-neutral, e.g., an animal or animated creation.

Ethnicity is any feature that suggests a cultural or racial background. Ethnicity is identified by skin color, speech accent, language spoken, and cultural name. An additional design feature that is included in this category is second language facility, where an additional language is provided in which to use the software, suggesting a cultural or ethnic provisional narrative.

Circumscription of logic is a narrative indicator created as a result of this research, and is defined as a design feature that makes a decision of logic in the software that could be left to interpretation. An example of circumscription of logic narrative is illustrated in a decision designed in the software program SimCity, a city development simulation game, where the child creates and develops a city. The child is guided in making decisions by the software's "rules for city development," which provides detailed reasoning for what the child, as city developer, can and cannot do, presumably imitating real-life. The experience of a real city development simulation is misleading for, when paying for taxes, the algorithm or basis for calculation for the tax bill is not provided. Taxes are a primary concern in capitalist development but the software author did not provide this information. What is the narrative provided here? How was it decided that this lesson of city development is not provided? Is this a case of software designers' oversight? Did the software designers deem the information not necessary to know? How would this narrative differ if the software designers were H & R Block, Nintendo, or Scholastic?

Regardless of the reason, the narrative result is: You don't need to understand, or be able to question, the tax calculations even after paying the tax -- pay the tax or you can't continue to play the software. This omission is significant in terms of narrative because the game's social construction is narrowed and, in this case, negatively circumscribed by the author, the software designer, by the withholding of important rules that provide learning and understanding of city development -- which is the purpose of the game. The player must adhere to the limits of the software, assume the narratives as provided by the
software, and absolutely follow the rules of the software -- or the child can't play.

Circumscription of logic is a manifestation of narrative that is not expected to be evaluated by review publications for three reasons. First, it is a new concept developed, in this research, out of the necessity to define a narrative structure embedded in the design and logic of the software. Second, the review publications examined to date, if they evaluate the design of the software, discuss these designs as features or options available for use. For example, the Design Features category of the review publication Children's Software Revue defines this category as "How 'smart' is this program?", and includes sub-categories such as "The program has speech capacity", and "A child's ideas can be incorporated into the program design in some way". Although these definitions are important to narrative in other ways, which is discussed in more detail later, they do not represent an evaluation of the design logic or decisions that can be made in the software. Third, circumscription of logic should not only be explicitly defined but have a method with which to identify its occurrence. This is very difficult to do since there are many types of logic that can occur in a software program, and such a method has not been found. However, the SimCity( illustration does provide a skeletal framework with which to circumscription of logic identification method was developed by this researcher, referred to as COLIM.

Analyzing Narratives in Educational Software

A diverse range of publications offer reviews of children's educational, entertainment, and edutainment software, which include and are not limited to news weeklies, newspapers, software manufacturers, software magazines, digazines, and periodicals. From these, review publications were selected that were not organizationally related to, or take advertising dollars from, software publishers, and whose sole purpose was the review of children's educational software. Based on these criteria, the review publications selected that examine educational software were Children's Software Revue (CSR), The Computer Museum's Guide to the Best Software for Kids (CMG), and the International Society for Technology in Education's Educational Software Preview Guide (ESPG). Moreover, the publications's primary purpose must be the review of educational software for children.

Children's Software Revue, edited by Warren Buckleitner, Ellen Wolock, and Ann Orr, is published six times a year, available by subscription ($24) and website, and provides a mission statement in their publication: "Children's Software Revue helps teachers and parents better use computers with children by providing timely, accurate, objective information about the children's software market" (p.2).

The Computer Museum Guide to the Best Software for Kids, edited by Cathy Miranker and Alison Elliott, is a book last published in 1995 ($14), and states: "[It] was conceived to fill a need at The Computer Museum. After a day of exploration, more and more
families would end their visit to the museum with a question: What software should we get for our children?" (p. ix).

The ISTE Educational Software Preview Guide is published each year after the meeting of the Annual Software Evaluation Forum, and available in hardcopy or disk from the participating institutions ($10). "[It] lists favorably reviewed technology resources for instructional use in preschool through grade twelve. It is NOT a buying guide. It has been developed solely as an aid to educators in locating programs they may want to preview. The Consortium's participants recommend that all resources be previewed by educators to determine its suitability for their instructional programs and students" (p. vi).

Each review publication varies in purpose, structure, review criteria, the depth of the criteria, and the testers used.13 Children's Software Revue and Educational Software Preview Guide are published bi-monthly and annually, respectively, however the Computer Museum Guide is a one-time published book and doesn't indicate if follow-up publications will be available. The one consistency across these publications is the audience: parents and educators. These review publications also represent a broad range of availability, via subscription and web, bookstores, and educational institutions, respectively.

Mathematics was the educational software category chosen to be examined because it's considered an important skill for children to learn both by parents and teachers. Educational Resources (is an educational software and technology distribution house with 34% of the school market.14 Each year they publish their Top Ten selling software by subject and genre.15 ER's 1996 list of the "Top Ten" mathematic software sold to schools (Appendix A) was selected as the titles reviewed. These titles would represent the mathmatic educational software most likely used by teachers and parents to teach mathematical concepts and skills in ER's market, and may infer the titles used in the remaining portion of the market.

Considerations for Evaluating Narratives in Educational Software

Of the three review publications selected for examination, Children's Software Revue (CSR) , The Computer Museum Guide to the Best Software for Kids (CMG), and the ISTE Educational Software Preview Guide (ESPG), only CRS and CMG provided review criteria. It is the only selected review publication with criteria that explicitly address any the three selected manifestations of narrative: gender, ethnicity, and circumscription of logic.

CSR has six major review categories: Ease of Use, Childproof, Educational, Entertaining, Design Features, and Value. The "Educational" category is described as "What can a child learn from this program?", and provides thirteen evaluation sub-categories. Two of those sub-categories are "Content is free from gender bias" and "Content is free from
ethnic bias". There are no criteria that in some way addresses circumscription of logic. Each sub-category is rated, and the range includes A= Always, S.E. = Some Extent, N = Never, and n.a. = Not Applicable. A CSR software program review lists the average score for each of the six categories, and a total average score of the six categories' ratings. As a result, it is not possible to know the rating given for sub-categories such as "Content is free from gender bias" and "Content is free from ethnic bias", and determine how gender and ethnicity narratives appear in that software program.

ESPG did not publish the review criteria used by its Annual Software Evaluation Forum, stating only that "The products listed in [the] guide have been favorably reviewed at participating sites by knowledgeable computer-using educators. Placement of a title on a list and into specific subjects, grade levels, and instructional modes reflects the best judgment of the Consortium's participants . . . The Consortium's participants recommend that all resources be previewed by educators to determine their suitability for their instructional programs and students". Although its review criteria are not explicitly stated, there are several implied criteria:

The Consortium "lists favorably reviewed technology resources for instructional use" (p.vi).

Criteria: The software title must pass each of the participants' criteria, whatever those criteria may be.

Implications: As representatives of departments of education, computer consortiums, universities, and school districts, their recommendations imply expert knowledge. In the preface, the Guide states "It is NOT a buying guide...but an aid to educators in locating programs they may want to preview". However, software titles have been selected out at this point, and some criteria were used for that selection. That criteria could have included narrative in the form of checking for character representation and the software's logical design.

"Titles not included in the guide fall into the following categories:

Not yet widely reviewed,
not readily available to review,
unfavorably reviewed,
or outside the specified categories".

Criteria: Respectively: The software titles must be reviewed by a predetermined quorum of the Consortium's participants. The software must be readily available for review - defining what is meant by "readily available", e.g., on the market or a copy was purchased or made available to the Consortium. There are criteria with which to judge software as favorable or unfavorable (addressed in #1 above). There are specified categories into the software must fall.
Implications: There is a consensus that must occur to recommend a software title. Software must be available for review (the meaning is not provided). If a software title is reviewed unfavorably, it could be for any reason including narrative. Software may not be reviewed, perhaps because its category is not educational or instructional such as games or entertainment, or doesn't fit into one of the specified categories.

CMG uses an evaluation "checklist" and "constantly asked questions about the qualities [they] considered essential" (p. xii). This checklist has three categories: learning, looks, and longevity. In examining these publications' review for manifestations of narrative, three concerns developed:

Software review publications rarely evaluate for gender and ethnic narrative in educational software, and in the one case where these narratives are evaluated (CSR) the ratings are obscured and such content is not discernible from the review before the software is purchased by the teacher or educator (see #3).

There are occurrences of unstated criteria. These unstated criteria not only suggest that there are unstated yet explicit evaluations made on educational software, as in the case of the ESPG's Consortium, but that it is plausible that narratives are one of the possible criteria in the judgment of these software. If this is so, knowing what types of narratives were examined would provide insight into the social construction provided by the educational software reviewed, even if that software were favorably reviewed.

Rating obscurity is observed in some reviews published by CSR, and CMG does not provide a rating or discussion for the individual criteria or questions asked in each category. In the case of CMG, a one sentence description is provided to summarize findings, along with a starred rating for that category. An overall starred rating is given to the software title.

If there is to be an awareness of narrative in educational software, there must be criteria used for the recognition of narrative. The necessity of an awareness of narrative examined in books, music, and film is supported and maintained by teachers and parents (Delpit, 1995; Slade and Kelly and Oberg, 1997; Postman, 1993; Mander, 1991; Garrison, 1997; Ayers and Ford, 1996). It is curious that narrative examination in media has not crossed-over into software programs. Reflection on the development of review criteria for its media predecessors suggests several explanations for the absence of narrative review in software.

First, software programs are a new medium, and their use in schools as an educational tool is a very recent development. The review of software programs has not yet matured to the stage where narrative is reviewed as an important and required criterion, as in the other media. CSR is the first of the selected review publications to explicitly evaluate for narrative, as determined by this research.
Second, the creation of software review publications is a very recent occurrence. The software market is extremely lucrative and the opportunity to provide purchase recommendations is good for for-profit publications and the manufacturer. With the advent of software that teaches, a concern for the selection of appropriate software for children has resulted in the development of non-profit software review periodicals; one of the earliest being CSR in 1991.

Third, narrative in digitized media is a very new concept. The challenge to understand how modern media affect our perceptions of ourselves and social construction continues, and this issue is still debated in discussions on the impact of television and film (Cosby, 1994; Davies, 1996; Szulc, 1997). As each new digitized medium is created, the narratives continue to exist in its content, but remain unaddressed until we learn to adapt to the new medium itself. Fourth, only recently were software programs considered as a technology containing a narrative or point of view (Matthis, 1997; Friedman and Nissenbaum, 1997). It was previously considered a tool or object that contained information but not necessarily a social construct.

The absence of the review of narrative in educational software is especially noteworthy since narrative is a key component used by software publishers to engage the learner in the program. Without an intriguing, attention-getting character, action, or fun purpose, the software is not expected to succeed (Blank and Berlin, 1991; Burton in Baker, Clay, and Fox, 1996; Davies, 1996; Provenzo, 1991). But are those narratives helpful or hurtful as they are absorbed by the learner? And how would teachers and parents know this if the criteria for checking narratives are included in the software review process?

**Conclusion**

The challenge for parents and educators is to find not only the most appropriate software for their children, but the most appropriate software review publication on which to base their selections.

Just as parents and educators are learning how to purchase software, and to know the criteria on which to base that purchase, they must also learn how to select a review publication that will guide them in that purchase.

Based on this research's theory that gender, ethnicity, and circumscription of logic are the major software design features important in the engagement of children, Children's Software Revue and the Educational Software Preview Guide are recommended review publications for parents and educators to guide them in their purchase of educational software. Children's Software Revue checks for the author's narrative by rating the gender and ethnicity content bias in software titles; however, the actual content bias ratings are obscured by the rolling of these ratings into the review's overall rating, and as a result they can't be known to the reader. For this reason, CRS receives a provisional recommendation. If CSR corrects this obscurity by publishing the actual gender and...
ethnicity content ratings, it will take a tremendous step forward in providing more pertinent review data to parents and educators. The Education Software Preview Guide is an expansive list of educational software titles with unparalleled categorizations by genres, subjects, instructional modes, grade levels, and operating systems. ESPG does not publish any selection criteria because it states it not a buying guide, although there is a selection process for the list. For this reason, ESPG receives a provisional recommendation. If ESPG published its criteria, including narrative for educators and parents, it will become an unprecedented review publication -- providing reviews of importance and depth for a large number of titles. The Computer Museum's Guide to the Best Software for Kids is not recommended, as it does not check for narrative; and because it is a book, its opportunity to develop and publish new criteria with new software titles is eclipsed by the frequency of publication by CSR and ESPG.

There are presently great efforts being made in school reform, involving the assessment and standardization of teaching methods and measurement tools, which may not be enough. There must be understanding and concerted effort made by educators to evaluate software for narratives, as they would for literature, film, and television programs.

Implications for educational software in the future partially lies in the technology. Video games enjoyed high success because of its fast rate of animation, which is now possible in computer software. The demand to illustrate more complex imagery and faster action, and therefore narrative, fuels the need for faster technologies. We must all keep watch to make certain that the need for speed doesn't eclipse the need to check for narrative.
Notes

Auteur is the present theory of authorship in filmmaking (Kracauer, 1960).

The word play is commonly used to describe the use of the software.

Agents are characters in the software through with the child takes action or gets direction for the software's use.

This description is from the SimCity box.

This example may not be seen in the updated SimCity 2000 program.

H&R Block, Nintendo, and Scholastic representing home productivity software, game software, and child education software developers, respectively.

Edutainment is a market term for software considered (usually by the manufacturer) both educational and entertainment. It is mentioned here because it is well known but it not considered by this research as a measurable term, and the term is not used by review publications.

Digizines are magazines on cd-rom.

These publications' lack of review bias based on a relationship with the manufacturers did not eliminate other problems that impacted the review of the software, such as the lack of robust evaluation criteria and biases toward high level production values.9 Selecting out review publications based on their relationship with software manufacturers was maintained, however,

to control for this bias and observe other biases more clearly, as discussed later.

Each publication was read fully for it's content and stated purpose.

Boston, Massachusetts.

CSR also uses "children, and their parents and friends"; CMG "..consulted educational specialists, multimedia experts, developers of both software and hardware. And they've worked closely with children and parents"; ESPG states that "Compilation of the ..[guide]..was the major purpose of the Software Evaluation Forum, held at Lesley College, Cambridge, MA, on April 18-21, 1996."

This is true even for review publications not chosen.

Based on information from Educational Resources (www.edresources.com).

Software genres include, and are not limited to: Authoring System, Computer Programming, Presentation, Drill and Practice, Education Game, Entertainment, Exploration, Internet, Problem Solving, Reference, Simulation, Tool, and Tutorial (ESPG)


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The Grand Bazaar: Trust, Multicultural Education, and the Education of Teachers

Wade A. Carpenter

Abstract

Trust is necessary for education. But distrust is a major problem in urban, multiethnic schools. The existing literature on multicultural education, while strong on political, sociological, and economic concerns, devotes little if any attention to the character of the teacher. Teachers whose preparation has not connected ethics and ethnicity may consider resistance theory as simply shrill, and disregard it entirely. The article goes on to suggest that teachers get a highly personalized, balanced liberal and technical preparation from professors intimately familiar with urban k-12 instruction.

The Grand Bazaar

It's dirty in the Grand Bazaar; hot, oppressive, and crowded. It's all so unfamiliar, so totally unlike home. It smells bad. Around every corner someone will be begging for a handout. The people you encounter may love your money, but they may hate you. And you really can't tell, because you can't read their faces well. Their expressions seem to cover a very narrow range: the sullen, the uninterested, and the obsequious. You have learned to regard smiles with suspicion. Pickpockets and cut-purses roam free. A "vendor" will approach you, invading your body space to push a map or a tray of chocolates under your nose, and while your vision is blocked by it, he is unzipping your handbag or fanny-pack. And you'll never feel a thing. And you know that if there is an unpleasant event, the authorities will have little sympathy for you. These are not your people; you are the minority, and in their world. And the history between your people and them is not pretty. As you approach a stall, you know better than to show an interest in any item, because once you do, you're hooked - You will buy, and you will be cheated. Or you will have to be a bastard to avoid it. In the Grand Bazaar, there is nothing but suspicion between sellers and buyers. The assumption is that the other guy is trying to rip you off, and the assumption is usually right. It is almost a certainty that without a guide who knows the Grand Bazaar, you will be victimized.

Is this Tijuana? Istanbul? Kinshasa? Or, metaphorically, is it an American public school? Many kids view their schools and teachers with the same sort of apprehension felt by the tourist in the Grand Bazaar. Yes, one can learn in such a place. In fact, one learns a great
deal, and learns it very quickly. But can one be educated in this atmosphere? As long as teachers do not understand the suspicion and hostility that many students bring to the classroom and experience in it, those kids and those teachers themselves will be victimized by the schools.

**Distrust and Education**

Many of the questions being raised by professors writing in professional journals are extraordinarily valuable. Unfortunately, their solutions are often far less so. Perhaps an experience in the Grand Bazaar could help teacher education students and their professors understand why minorities don't do well in our public schools and our universities. Inner-city experience and overseas travel can be wonderfully helpful. Being a minority dealing with a hostile and inscrutable majority in an atmosphere of mutual distrust enables one to see at first hand a near-certain recipe for educational failure. A basic problem facing many of our teachers is a lack of trust by the kids. Every teacher who deals with lower-SES, minority, and inner-city youth has seen this, and many see it every day. Whether they have articulated it or not, many of those kids are silently asking that teacher "What do you have to teach me that's really worth knowing?" and "Why should I believe you?"

One of the best contributions of leftist professors to education theory is their explanation of student resistance to what is perceived as an unfair, alien system. (Giroux, 1988; Kunjufu, 1985, 1988)

First, we have to admit that people of color and other minorities have reasons to distrust the white majority. Our history is such that they would be stupid to trust us. According to one survey discussed in the Chronicle of Higher Education, 44% of whites agreed with the statement that "most people can be trusted," but only 16% of blacks thought so (Dovidio, 1997). Given this scenario, multicultural education becomes at best one more feeble reform to lay on overburdened teachers. At worst it is a fashionable set of political positions and pedagogical techniques that will get grants funded and professors published. Either way, it will be discarded when the next hot idea comes along.

**Distrust and the Schools**

Whites and conservative intellectuals believe that minority suspicions and rhetoric are overwrought, and it is hard to believe that most white people are out to "get" minorities. I don't know many white people who spend much time thinking about how they can oppress people of color. I don't believe that black people are a particularly prominent issue in most white people's daily thinking, and I suspect that believing so may be a particularly juvenile form of racial self-flattery. But it really doesn't matter whether or not white individuals are intentionally hostile to minorities: Minorities perceive hostility, and there are plenty of statistics to support their perceptions. The school system gives inequitable treatment to minorities. Institutional racism is easily documentable. Black/white achievement gaps are appalling (National Center for Educational Statistics,
But it's not all white folks' fault. Minorities themselves can behave just as stupidly as whites can: Every day the inner-city teacher sees peer pressure directed against academically successful minority kids for "playing white". Teachers see the kids' skepticism in the sullen listlessness, misconduct, and resistance of a significant percentage of their students. If they are mediocre teachers, they assume it's just misbehavior and punish them, which usually only compounds the problem. If they are wise teachers, they try to distinguish the thoughtless misbehavior from the deliberate, if pre-theoretical, resistance to an institution those kids see as oppressive (Freire, 1970). And then the teachers work on the kids personally, punishing when appropriate, and trying more positive approaches when appropriate. The wise kids distinguish between the worthwhile teacher and the ignorant or prejudiced. But the teacher cannot be wise who doesn't even know the questions the kids are asking. The kids cannot be wise if all they see every day are uninformed, underprepared teachers. The Left may be making some of the best analyses in recent education literature, but its often-inaccessible and fanciful solutions may only worsen the problems for teachers of good will trying to reach real, live kids. The Right seems to have a great deal of common sense in its emphasis on personal attributes, and we would be bigoted to misinterpret its intransigence as indifference or unkindness. But its obstructionism and invective on social and economic issues seldom help the teachers or the kids, either.

The Teacher and the Job

Many, perhaps most, of our teachers are decent people working under difficult conditions. Most of their obstacles are the result of policies to which teachers can only respond as best they can. But some teachers are of questionable technical competence. Kids are bringing problems into their classrooms that would strain the imagination of those who do not work there day in and day out. Our teachers need (1) a liberal education, (2) thorough technical preparation, and (3) guidance from experienced professors. But far too many pedagogy courses are mindless, childish, and useless (Koerner, 1963; Bestor, 1985; Goodlad, 1990). But contrary to some high-profile critics, the remedy for "Mickey Mouse" Methods classes is not to eliminate them, but to fix them.

Poor teaching undercuts our efforts at creating a trustworthy place in the school. The most liberally educated teacher will need a broad repertoire of tricks of the trade to do the job. Why should kids trust those teachers who are only marginally competent? Why should teachers trust the professors who sent them out only marginally competent? But competence is only a beginning: No matter how kind and skilled the teacher is, one cannot reason with a child who has reason to hate and fear.
Multicultural Education:

Trust and Education

If the Grand Bazaar is all there is to schools, it may be time to write them off entirely. If the hermeneutic of suspicion is all there is to the United States, the answer to Aristotle's great question: "How then can men live together?" is simple: We can't.

But is the Grand Bazaar all there is? Most people, of whatever shade or creed, love their children. Most value honesty. The concepts of courage, prudence, temperance, justice, faith, hope, and charity have nearly universal acceptance, as they did 2,000 years ago (Character Education Partnership, 1996). Every day countless acts of cross-ethnic good faith occur which seldom make the nightly news.

While separationism and ethnocentrism have many admirable features, they could also limit minorities' markets and discourse to one another, which may lead to a stagnant economy and stagnant cultures. Like racism, these isms are fraught with so many contradictions that any version of monoculturalism is not viable. Even in those localities where monoculturalism is a demographic reality, multicultural instruction is advisable since people can no longer assume they will live in their hometowns forever. The question of whether our education should or should not be multicultural is preposterous; it has always been. For instance, it is widely accepted among folklorists that Uncle Remus's "trickster" stories were covert instruction for young blacks in the necessary skills and guile of slave life (Levine, 1978). But that raises the interesting question: Why did Uncle Remus tell the white boy? The answer is easy: To educate whites, of course. They've tried for centuries, and some of us have always gotten the message - probably about the same proportion of people anywhere who get any educational message. In short, we have too much to offer one another either to resegregate or to settle for any one-sided cultural dominance.

Trust and the Schools

So, how may educators deal with the distrust problem? First, bright people of whatever ethnicity or religion draw lines. They look for commonalities as well as differences; that's why they are considered bright. They trust the trustworthy, and devote much of their learning to spotting the untrustworthy. Surprisingly, the common feature to both multicultural education and character education lies in teaching kids how to discriminate well. Although the holy trinity of the left (race, class, and gender) is important, those elements are themselves constructs with little meaning apart from personal character, and character is the first step toward the social construction of trust. The Right is right, economic or any other sort of determinism is mistaken. Teacher educators should pay more attention to admissions, coursework, and guidance to turn out teachers who are worthy of trust.
But the Left is also right: moral rectitude is not enough, either. Robert E. Lee was an extraordinarily admirable man, but a Lee victory would nonetheless have meant continued slavery for two races. Praxis - reflective, intellectually defensible social and political action - is needed as well as character and culture. The hungry cannot eat Plato's Republic, and the abuse of high culture and manners to hold people down is easy to document. But the rhetoric of the educationist Left is also misguided: Radical-progressive theory coated over with inaccessible language hidden in refereed journals doesn't accomplish much, either. The poor find high-flown deconstructionist theory and feel-good pop psychology poor substitutes for solid knowledge and intellectual skill that enable them to compete with the well-connected. The inner-city teacher quickly discovers that most minority kids are far less interested in intellectualized "discourses of hegemony" than they are in getting a fairer piece of the action. Content-lite instruction limited to immediately "relevant" themes is unsatisfying. As an inner-city mother said to a teacher with the sort of open-ended job she coveted for her child, she wanted to know Why the school keeps sending my daughter home with all this crap.... She knows 'bout landlords. She knows about gangs and whatnot. She needs to know what she don't know. If my girl is going to get your job, you need to give her everything. Not half. Not some. Everything. Get her to where you are, so she can pass you by" (Glasser, 1997: 504-05).

The Preparation of Teachers:

The Professor and the Job

Intellectual and bureaucratic egalitarianism have been academia and government's way of avoiding equality and equity (Dovidio, 1997; Carpenter, 1989). Concepts like multicultural education and critical theory can be very useful in establishing a base for successful action, but they generally miss the mark when divorced from messy personal experience. Only five percent of the nation's Education professoriate have experience teaching in multicultural or inner-city situations (Gollnick, Smith, & Huber, 1994), and it shows. Creative exchange arrangements with urban k-12 schools is only the first of many possibilities to address this problem.

Personal character, community praxis, and worthwhile instruction are only necessary preconditions for trust; they are not sufficient. The liberal elements of teacher education are also vitally important. But curriculum theory and instructional practice -the technical side of teacher education - also play a role in the promotion or diminution of trust. Does our curriculum emphasize change and difference to the neglect of stability and commonality? Arthur Schlesinger and Diane Ravitch (1992, 1990) have raised concerns about an excessively divisive agenda being promoted by some of the multiculturalists. Multicultural education advocates like Banks (1993), Sleeter (1995), and Giroux (1997) certainly do emphasize change and reform in the curriculum, and heaven knows there is
much in their constituents' lives that needs change and reform. But when one reads the hyperbole and the tortured deconstructionism of some writers, one wonders how much a trust-destroying worldview is being accepted into the curriculum. Because of the lack of correspondence between fashionable theory and classroom practice, (Cuban, 1993) any conclusions would be risky. So now we have to consider the quality of the classroom practice.

Most K-12 teachers are gentle souls who are better conflict resolvers than conflict generators, so only in their wildest enthusiasms can scholars imagine teachers as willing sources of oppression. Unfortunately, the same traits may make it difficult to turn teachers into the agents of liberation that Giroux, Sleeter, and company rightly envision. The Education professoriate that prepares those teachers is generally learned and honorable, but its effectiveness is questionable, by its own admission (see, for example, Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Herbst, 1989; Goodlad, 1990). Scholars as broadly liberal as Martin Haberman (1995) especially deplore the preparation of inner-city teachers. The outcome is that kids have little respect for ignorant teachers, and find more sinister subcultures more attractive. Then the school itself is at jeopardy, since without personal safety, the kids would be foolish to trust their schools and their teachers. Schools have enough trouble as it is from the alienated and the criminals; if K-12 teachers lose the trust of the kids who want to learn, all they will have left going for them will be those wretched doggie tricks they learned in their "Methods" classes.

The boring, low-level teaching typical of insecure, poorly prepared teachers (Siskin & Little, 1995; Bushweller, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1997) is unlikely to bring about trust, much less achievement. The most conservative instruction is worth little if it only enables students to recite names, dates, amendments and state capitals. On the other hand, the most critical education is worth little if it just empowers students to recite litanies of oppression. We need liberally educated and technically adept teachers who can dive deeply and broadly (Borrowman, 1956).

We have the right to demand that teachers pay close attention to the kids. Arthur Powell's recent (1996) description of the personal attention given to prep school students is loaded with fine ideas that might be adaptable to public schools. Future teachers who will teach the masses need professors who know the k-12 classroom - especially the urban or multicultural classroom - intimately, and who devote the same attention to them that prep-school teachers give the elite. The recent initiatives toward reducing class size in elementary schools are praiseworthy. Now let's talk about reducing teacher load in the secondary schools.

As many kids do not trust the teachers, the teachers' poor opinion of their professors is no secret (Bushwell, 1995; Carpenter, in press). "Irrelevant", "out of touch", and "la-la land" are terms too-often used to describe their professors and their courses by veteran teachers. Teacher education professors need to be out there in the k-12 schools, often and
intensively. Their students need a highly personalized preparation devoted to developing their character as well as their knowledge and skill.

All the earnest scholarly calls for character and justice, choice and equity, prosperity and transformation, and achievement and opportunity are nonsense to the kids. They aren't so dumb as to believe any of it. They will never trust us - and should never trust us - until we at least reach the minimum. As the creed and the tithe are for Christians, adequate preparation is the minimum for teachers. Character education is an intrinsic part of the liberal education tradition (Maritain, 1943; Kimball, 1986), and it is a needed element of multicultural education. Tailoring instruction to individual and group audience is an intrinsic part of the technical tradition (Monroe 1952; Hale-Benson, 1986). Hence, careful preparation of teachers of character by professors who know the urban k-12 classroom is not a fond wish, to be jettisoned in the interest of cash-cow courses for the university. Without at least this good faith effort, the Grand Bazaar really is all there is in many schools. And it is a dirty place.

References


Mi yo, que me arrebatan mi yo! exclaimed Michelet; a shout that is hurled - muted, albeit so loud it can be (and often is) perceived as strident - by those who claim "am e Rican" and who also are "American" citizens. Because Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States since Spain, who originally colonized it in the 15th century, ceded it to the United States as bounty of war after losing the Spanish American War in 1898, it has long been condemned to suffer the throes of cultural identity. For the last decade, I have harbored the suspicion that Puerto Ricans have come gradually to suffer a concept of cultural identity that is deeply embedded in the continuity of postcolonial structures. This assumption is based on my observation of the ways in which validation structures superimposed by the metropolis assume power over definitions of cultural identity among Puerto Ricans. The most salient one, and the one I will concern myself with in this article is language usage.

Pursuing this quest has held my interest for quite a while: if language is the determining factor, who can claim ascription to the "true" Puerto Rican identity, when there are as many Puerto Ricans living in the United States unable to claim Spanish as their vernacular? What are the validating elements? Who decides?

The concept of cultural identity as it is usually played amongst Puerto Ricans is closely tied to one of three modes of linguistic performance: 1) those who speak only Spanish, most of whom are island bound, and who claim true "Borinqueñismo" 1 2) those who speak only English, continent bound, who are mostly called "Nuyoricans" 2, and 3) those who speak both languages, but who feel more comfortable in one or the other, depending on the ties that bind them to Borinquen, or to any of many locations in "el norte". This multifaceted identity crossroad is not new to Puerto Rican discourse. It arises from the fact that our language as we know it has always been tied to colonial structures. We are hard put to identify the totality of our native forbears' language, given the excellent job the Spaniards did on their numbers. We received Spanish from the Iberian invaders; English was imposed by the United States invaders, and thus, ironically, we now struggle with English through the Spanish we inherited from the colonizers who virtually eliminated our native forebears. Nonetheless, it is a Spanish sparkled by words emerging from the Taíno substratum - huracán, enagua, batey, to name but a few.
When German de la Granda published his book analyzing the healthy structure and continuous usage of Spanish in Puerto Rico, there was a collective sigh of relief about how we had managed to retain "nuestra lengua" vis-à-vis the frontal attack posed by the English language. During this whole process of acknowledging language as the collective instrument of homogenization, the datum of the assumption that those who spoke Spanish were the true Puerto Ricans, and those who were English-speaking tended to be looked at partly askance sort of escaped us. The metropolis exercised at that time (as it continues to do today) the role of validator. Stateside, the accented English of the islanders is not perceived as apt; yet neither is the Bronx accented Rican accepted as valid currency. Spanish banished as an alien presence; Puerto Rican stateside speakers subsumed in a sibilant and insulting term: SPIKS. Unfruitful as they were, the efforts of the U.S. of imposing the English language on the islanders via not only the language of instruction, but through the use of textbooks and other educational materials, have taken their toll on both sides of the ocean. But none suffer it more than those who reside stateside. Once again, following on the steps of the defunct Spanish Empire, the metropolis seeks to define our voice. And that voice is embedded in a language that we may choose to ascribe to or not, yet one that determines our personal circumstance. Spain stifled our forebears' voice through genocide. The U.S. stifles our inherited voice through the onslaught of our mores and folkways; through the negation of bilingualism as an achievement; through the continued isolation of "the language issue" from the colonization issue. There are many who would say that the sum of this is tantamount to genocide.

So if the language that we speak defines us, who are the true Puerto Ricans? Who validates us? Who are we associated with?

As it is wont to be the case in the U.S., ethnic definition rapidly becomes racial definition. In a survey made by the Latino National Political Survey in 1992, 47% of Puerto Ricans born in the island identify themselves as "Hispanic" or "Latino", so as to escape the dichotomy superimposed by the metropolis of having to choose between White or Black- there's no option for those who are a mixture of both. There is no place where one can claim to be Puerto Rican. Yet another way by which the metropolis imputes our cultural identity, retaining the right to validate our existence, albeit in paper. The answer lying in being subsumed in somebody else's panic.

Given the diasporic experience of Puerto Ricans, the role that language usage plays in the designation of cultural identity and the ways in which the answers are isolated from linguistic sources remains one of interest.

In de Saussure's distinction between langue (the language system in the abstract) and parole (which refers to the actual utterances of human speakers), parole remains variegated and personal, but langue provides the abstract framework, the structure that is not subject to individual whims and adaptations. It is constructed socially. In some Puerto Rican actualities the langue emphasizes adherence to a language rid of pesky referents to
the colonial structure, as embodied in the intrusive English language insertions and accommodations, while the parole rejoices in rapping its way into an irreverent convergence of the Bard meeting the Hidalgos. Thus, I cannot but view the Puerto Rican langue as a system of signs shuttling between double-sided linguistic signs where one side signifies and the other is signified. One side across the ocean, another side ghettoized; both socially constructed by the metropolis. How much power does the signifier have? We must deconstruct the 'sign' in order to assess its significance.

In Castile, during the seventeenth century, the Military Orders, who were the arbiters of nobility, required "proof of nobility and purity of Christian blood on both sides for three generations". They would, in effect, validate the status system through three principles of social classification: function, lineage and wealth. Today, social scientists tell us that migrant populations require three generations before they can return a loving gaze towards their "roots". And we all know that beneath the cloak of equality in these United States, those same principles of function, lineage and wealth still lurk. Language, an integral part of the lineage is a required proof for the Puerto Rican who searches or claims validation of his/her cultural identity. Yet the function of the Puerto Ricans within the economic picture of the U.S. continues to place them within the lower echelon of the hierarchy. How, then, can third generation Ricans aspire to the wealth that would propel them out of their constricted real or perceived circumstance and towards a validation of their Puertoicanness? It is clearly not by speaking English, since already three generations have lost their Spanish and have yet to see the fruits of compensation for their loss. (Not to mention the fact that the Blacks have been speaking English for the last two hundred years and have yet to set themselves free of the economic shackles that bind them into the bundles of "the poor".) It is not by becoming monolinguals in English unable to claim their own rich cultural patrimony yet unable to partake of the Anglo investiture. And so far it certainly has not been through the continued defense of Spanish as a language of instruction and identification. Nevertheless, the language issue is used to pit state-side dwellers against islanders. Who can vote in the plebiscite? Who should? Is language the issue? Who decides? The status may not be at issue, but the language certainly is.

What we have witnessed in the recent years is a transformation in the way Puerto Ricans acknowledge their solidarity - a transition from a vocabulary where the signifier held the key to acceptance based on linguistic uniformity to one wherein the signified claims allegiance not based on linguistic ascription, but on the love of the land and things Puerto Rican. There are proportionately more Independentistas living in the U.S. than in Puerto Rico. This stands to reason, given the mistreatment and general defacement of bilinguality and otherness experienced by Puerto Ricans in this country. Yes, we see indices of discomfort when el amor patrio forces islanders to stand cheek to jowl with Nuyoricans in order to affirm and defend the island's patrimony. After all, there are "orgullos que proteger" on both sides of the Atlantic. But when all is said and done, the
issue of cultural identity shapes not only the way we speak about ourselves and about our world, but it also reflects how we perceive our situation in the political arena. The defense of the language we have come to claim as our voice, whether it is vis-à-vis the invader or in intra class or gender altercations is what solidifies our resolve to not be subsumed into that scary void of 'Porto Rico' 10, where we are perforce obliged to explain ourselves, and in a language that we do not claim as our own, at that.

Notes

1Borinquen is the indigenous name for what is now known as Puerto Rico

Nuyorican is the name ascribed to Puerto Ricans born and residing in New York.

In Spanish, the name for the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States is translated literally as Free, Associated State.

Hidalgo is the embodiment of hidalguia, the traditional definition of which is 'the nobility which descends to men through their lineage'.


A rallying point for the Popular Democratic Party in Puerto Rico was 'El status no está en issue' (The status is not at issue)

Followers of pro-independence movement

Love of the motherland

Pride to be salvaged

An aceptation that English speakers insisted in applying to the island's name in an effort to Anglicize it.
The Ebonics Debate: Perspectives and Possibilities
Mary Ann Johnson

Personal Reflections

This paper represents the second part of a journey I began seven years ago. I sat in a professional development training class for literacy educators at Lesley College in Cambridge, MA., and challenged my professor. We'd been discussing David Wood's book, How Children Think and Learn, which addresses language learning and the use of dialect by African American students. Until this point I disdained Black English Vernacular (BEV), and what I termed "that kind of talk." My instructor elucidated Wood's insights by informing me that African American dialect was not "inferior" or bungled English. BEV was simply a dialect--something different from standard English. What was she saying? Who was she, a white scholar telling me, a highly educated African American professional that I was ignorant regarding an African American subject? But that was a mentor's role according to Daloz (1986). That is, in my journey as a literacy educator, she was helping me to become a "competent traveler." I became confused yet stimulated. My beliefs about people who talked "that way" were challenged.

This spirited discussion prompted me to begin my own informal research about the nature of African American dialect. I began to listen carefully to people who used that dialect--particularly on television--and to examine my responses as they spoke. Instead of discounting what they said if they happened to leave an 'ed' off the end of a word, I learned that, indeed, one's speech had little to do with the level of wisdom presented. I remember listening to a tenant organizer in Chicago's Cabrini Green section. She spoke in Black English Vernacular. I marveled at this woman's courage--courage that I lacked--and the wealth of ideas she expressed.

Today, I take pride in the fact that I've become an advocate for linguistic diversity, enlightening and supporting teachers who find themselves challenged in meeting the educational demands of such cross-cultural communication (Nelson-Barber and Meier, 1990; Pine and Hilliard, 1990). At the same time, I am ashamed that I reached graduate school before realizing my ignorance and need for a new "thought-set" (Good and Brophy, 1987).

With these revelations came a tentative release of long held views about "highly stigmatized" (Dandy, 1991) forms of spoken English. I'd heard both of my parents say "wit" for "with" and "dem" for "them." My father always called me "MayAnn" instead of
MaryAnn in keeping with the BEV rule that drops the final "r" such as in Southern dialect (doe for door). But that was forgiven because he was my dad, and not "highly educated." However, I cringed whenever I heard other African Americans speak "that way" in my neighborhood, in school or in the media. I raised my son forbidding him to ever talk "that way" because I believed such talk denoted illiteracy and ignorance.

As a college instructor and teacher educator, I've now entered another era of learning as I seek to expand and share these new insights that engender greater awareness. All that I discuss here represents my present understandings about linguistic diversity and the African American Ebonics speaker. My intent is to raise levels of consciousness, change attitudes and spark informed discourse.

**Ebonics: Definition and Theories of Origin**

What is Ebonics?

Ebonics may be defined as the linguistic and paralinguistic features, which on a concentric continuum represent the communicative competence of the West African, Caribbean, and the United States slave descendants of African origin. It includes the grammar, various idioms . . . idiolects, and social dialects of Black people. Ebonics also includes nonverbal sounds, cues, and gestures, which are systematically and predictably utilized in the process of communication by Afro-Americans. - Dr. Ernie Smith, linguist, 1973

The word Ebonics is formed by combining ebony (black) and phonics (speech sounds). Before December 1996, when the Oakland school board decided to embrace Ebonics as a language bridge to standard English, most people hadn't heard of the term. Outrage erupted across the nation, in white and African American communities. Due, in part, to the "media's negative spin" (Williams, 1997, p. 208), the board's intent was completely misrepresented. Oakland's actual goals emphasized the teaching of standard English, but in ways that valued, utilized and supported students' use of their home or native language.

Some myths that prevailed included:

- Oakland is condoning slang and street language.
- Oakland is teaching Ebonics instead of standard English.
- Oakland has no research to support the use of code switching (bridging between Ebonics and standard English) to improve student achievement.

Ogbu (1997) underscores Oakland educators' intent and sense of urgency, as he provides compelling data regarding achievement of Black students in the Oakland Unified School District. The GPA in 1995-96 was 1.80 compared to the district average of 2.40. Black students comprised 53% of the student population; 71% of which were in Special Needs classes and 37% of gifted education population; 64% of students repeating grades were African American and 19% of Black twelfth graders had not met graduation requirements. A task force found that of the eight major language groups in Oakland,
African Americans had the lowest scores on standardized language tests. Black children were over represented in Special Needs classes primarily due to low language assessment test scores.

This information prompted the Oakland school board to adopt Ebonics as a way to provide strategies that would help Black students effectively transition from their home language to standard English. Their basic concern was not that Ebonics was a separate language, but that African American children--more than any other language group--were not achieving levels of English proficiency. Oakland Superintendent Carolyn Getridge (1997) wrote "...this policy mandates that effective instructional strategies be utilized to ensure that every child has the opportunity to achieve English language proficiency. Language development for African American students...will be enhanced with the recognition and understanding of the language structures unique to many African American students..." (p. 27).

In essence, many African American children speak Ebonics at home, and take it to school. They've learned it from their families and communities. Unfortunately, at school peers tease and teachers often scold, correct and admonish African American students not to "talk like that." As a result, African American Ebonics speakers feel degraded and inadequate.

It is out of this need to affirm the culture of African-American children while simultaneously transitioning them to "standard" English that the Ebonics movement evolved. Dr. Robert Williams, who coined the term Ebonics, states "the important point here is that my language is me! It is an extension of my being, my essence. It is a reflection and badge of my culture. Criticism of my language is essentially a direct attack on my self esteem and cultural identity" (1997, p. 209).

**History of Black English Vernacular**

Before describing predominant responses to the Ebonics controversy, I will present two theories concerning its roots as a linguistic system: The two are referred to as the Pidgin/Creole and the African Retention theories (Williams, 1997).

According to the Pidgin/Creole theory, Africans were brought from predominantly West African areas to America speaking a variety of languages. Holloway (1996) describes the enforced isolation of Bantu tribes on American plantations in the Carolinas. This allowed slaves to retain many aspects of their culture including religion, folk tales, storytelling and naming practices. As a result of this separateness, Africans were able to retain much of their cultural identity -- sharing across and between tribes - while adopting American customs and language. This composite language of various slave groups evolved into "pidgin" language. Pidgin was not the native language of any one group. Creole has pidgin as its source; children learned this pidgin language from their parents and the newly created language was called Creole (Williams, p. 211). Asante (1996) describes a
second stage of language development, "Englishization" or Ebonics whereby the Creole speaker began to "code switch." This is a process of transitioning back and forth to standard English.

The second theory, African Retention, posits that Ebonics has evolved from West African languages such as Ibu, Twi, Yoruba, Wolof, Fante, and Mandinka. They are dialects of the same speech system. Dr. Ernie Smith, an African American linguist, asserts that Ebonics is the mother tongue of the African American child just as Spanish is native to the Hispanic child. He believes that "Ebonics is the African American's linguistic memory of Africa applied to English words. Ebonics is the linguistic continuation of Africa in Black America "(1997). Examples of African retention include:

- absence of double consonant in final position (tes for test)
- lack of possessives (John house, Mommy shoe)
- absence of verb (we late, you bad)
- absent ed (it snow yesterday)

**Prevailing Responses to the Ebonics Debate**

As a result of readings and many discussions with my colleagues, I have discovered three predominant responses to the Ebonics controversy. I present these responses based on two seemingly conflicting personal beliefs. First of all, I value language differences, and believe individuals and groups benefit by maintaining vernacular speech varieties. At the same time, I contend that a successful life in America is facilitated by mastery of standard English, and that resources should be made available to all who aspire to such mastery. I believe that teachers will be more prone to provide the resources if they understand the concept of linguistic diversity as a strength upon which to build. The following responses provide educators with a broader view of that idea emanating from the work of noted scholars in the field of linguistics.

**Response One: Ebonics is a separate language. Speakers deserve bilingual services if needed.** The work of several African American linguists supports this view (Dilliard, 1973; Smitherman, 1986; Spears, 1996). They believe that the label 'Black English' is an oxymoron. That is, African American and Euro-American speech emanate from a separate linguistic base. English has Germanic roots with a completely different rule system than Ebonics. According to most linguists who support Ebonics, it is a separate language that has its origin in West and Niger-Congo African languages, and is not a mere dialect of English. Ebonics is, in essence, the mother tongue of African Americans. Thus, students have a right to receive bilingual support services because English is not their native language.

Dr. Ernie Smith contends that African American children have been viewed by teachers as "linguistic invalids." He argues that these children have a separate language, and thus
qualify for Limited English or Non-English Proficient (LEP/NEP) programs just as Hispanic, Asian or Native American children who come to school with different mother tongues. In his view Ebonics speakers are "equally entitled, and should be given ESL and their literacy instruction in the vernacular that they natively understand" (1995, p. 15).

Supporting this view, psychologists Williams and Rivers (1973) and educational researchers Simpkins, Holt and Simpkins (1974), have demonstrated how the use of Ebonics and the instructional strategy of code switching or bridging has served to increase reading scores of African American children. Results indicated that poor test performance did not mean that African American children were incapable of processing standard language. "...The child's intake gates [were] not activated by the stimulus properties of standard English. The child must be taught to code switch -- to move from Ebonics to Standard English" (Williams, 1997, p. 212). Although, I am heartened by results of such studies, I believe more expanded research efforts are necessary to support the call for formal bilingual support services for Ebonics speakers.

Response Two: Ebonics is a dialect of English. Speakers need culturally sensitive teachers to assist hem in "code switching" or transitioning (back and forth) to standard English.

This particular theory originated from the work of Labov (1970,1979) who studied language patterns of inner city children in Philadelphia. Labov concluded that non-Standard English was "just as logical and consistent as Standard English; it could be reproduced and it made sense. It is merely different." Lindfors (1980) defines standard English as a "dialect that doesn't call attention to itself, standard English is English as I speak it. The notion of a 'regional standard' dialect(rather than just a standard for the language in general) seems better to reflect the situation of dialect diversity in that it recognizes that there are many identifiable varieties of English, and that they are all valid linguistic systems" (p. 355).

Dandy, in her book, Black Communications: Breaking Down the Barriers (1991), defines a dialect as a "variation within a particular language." She contends that all English speakers speak a dialect of their native language. Consider the dialect differences of President Clinton and Senator Edward Kennedy. In Dandy's view, dialect is not inferior as is the popular belief. It is simply "something slightly different from another of the same type." She notes the fact that American sign language has dialect differences. She posits that dialect is a language system peculiar to a region or social group. It is set off from other dialects by unique features of pronunciation, word order and vocabulary." Dandy prefers to use Hoover's (1985) term Black Communications because she believes dialect is more than speech; it is a system of communication including speech sounds, grammar, vocabulary, verbal strategies, style, nonverbal behavior, sociolinguistic rules, special speaking behaviors and moral teachings (1991,
12). Proponents of this view encourage teachers to "view dialect different speakers as human beings who are developing the ability to communicate in two different modes: Standard or Educated English and Black Communications" (Dandy, 1991, p.110). The educator's task, according to this theory, is to view language as a medium of exchange and to help students become bidialectal---able to switch from one "code" to another as needed. Advocates of this view help students learn that standard English serves as a "passport allowing them to travel anywhere they want to go" (Brice-Finch, 1991). Dandy reminds teachers that "they were not born speaking Standard English as adults. . . Just as someone taught them the language, teachers must teach their language to students. The key lies in a teacher's attitude and expectations..." (p. 110).

Response Three: Ebonics is a substandard dialect reflecting deficient language skills. Speakers need immediate correction and formal instruction in standard English.

Psychologist Robert Williams convened a conference in 1973 at Washington University in St. Louis on language development because he'd "grown sick and tired"of African American speech being referred to as "substandard", "restrictive ", "deviant ", "deficit", "non-standard"...(1997, p. 209). Asa Hilliard, Professor of Education at Georgia State, describes the consequences of this deficit view: Feelings of shame and doubt among African American children are consequences of stigma since many African Americans, even the well educated, misunderstand basic linguistic principles...(1983, p. 32). Labov (1979) believes that most teachers "have no systematic knowledge of non-standard forms which oppose and contradict standard English" ( p. 4). Smitherman and Cunningham, educators at Michigan State University, view the "negative pronouncements on Ebonics" as indication of a "serious lack of knowledge about the scientific approaches to language analysis, and a galling ignorance about what Ebonics is . . ." (1997, p. 227).

Teachers holding the deficit view look upon deviations from standard English as "inherently evil, and they attribute these mistakes to laziness, sloppiness or the child's natural disposition to be wrong" (Labov, 1979, p. 4). These educators perceive the teaching of English as a "question of imposing rules upon chaotic, shapeless speech filling a vacuum by supplying rules where no rules existed before" (p.5).

Herein lies the challenge for those of us hoping to convince this camp that Ebonics is valuable--a strength upon which to build. We must persuade educators that the African American child's speech is NOT chaotic, shapeless or empty -- a point on which all linguists agree. There is a moral imperative for educators to initiate informed and mediated discourse in order to eradicate this pervasive, ill-informed ,damaging response to the Ebonics speaker.
Equipping Ourselves to Work With Ebonics Speakers

What helpful attitudes, beliefs or personal constructs should teachers be aware of?

The need to determine and evaluate one's personal attitude regarding Ebonics is, I believe, the most appropriate place for educators to begin. Without knowledge and appreciation of diverse communication styles, teachers may respond with lowered expectations and inappropriate teaching and assessment procedures as illustrated in Oakland.

Dandy (1991) describes research in actual classrooms "... Teachers interrupt these children more frequently in their oral reading, call on them less frequently, give them less time to answer questions, provide less verbal feedback for their answers, and provide them with less eye contact and positive nonverbal attention" (pp. 128-129). In a survey of teachers' attitudes about language differences, Shuy (1975) found that teachers equated lack of standard English vocabulary with overall lack of vocabulary. If children did not talk much at school and were unfamiliar with school related terms, teachers inferred that children just didn't have a vocabulary.

To address the needs of Ebonics speakers, a new mindset by teachers is required. I agree with Gere and Smith (1979) that attitude change necessitates "a conscious effort which entails the modification of one's thinking." They present five ways to begin this process of change, which I've posited as questions.

Am I aware of how language develops and its role in educating children?

What internal and external forces can I use to help change my perspective about Ebonics speakers?

Am I open to strategies and resources available to me?

Am I willing to try new approaches that include constructive feedback from peers and others?

Am I seeking ongoing support to adopt different linguistic perspectives?

By broadening their linguistic views, teachers equip themselves to serve as more able communicators with Ebonics speakers. In addition, teachers can play a critical role in helping such speakers understand how use of standard English provides access to educational, career and other opportunities. Equally important is the realization by educators that their expectations, beliefs and responses substantially raise or reduce communication barriers in the classroom.

What basic concepts or theory should I be familiar with?
The furor created by the Ebonics resolution passed in Oakland has brought the issue of language differences in our public schools to the national limelight. Ogbu (1997) has conducted compelling research that underscores the fact that this issue is not as simple as it appears. Results of his studies call for educators to become more knowledgeable in two major categories: language differences and "cultural meanings" of those language differences.

The following captures what I believe is required information for an educator's "linguistic diversity" repertoire:

Understanding language differences--both form and function--sensitizes educators; knowing the history of their own language as well as the history of English provides them with research based information that enables them to support students who speak "differently" (Labov, 1970, 1979; Hilliard, 1983).

Being aware of sociocultural factors provides teachers with a "big picture" perspective allowing for more flexible thinking and responses. This idea has been impressively articulated by Ogbu (1974, 1978, 1995) who found that when whites from similar socioeconomic status backgrounds are compared--at every class level--Blacks consistently perform lower than their White counterparts..." He concluded that the "phenomenon of low academic performance of Black students is not a product of mere poverty, inner city residence:..." Blacks experience this problem because of their particular type of minority status" (1997, p. 197). Ogbu refers to this phenomenon as "cultural ecological" in nature. The African American child comes to school with a culturally based or community based set of attitudes, knowledge or understanding that predisposes him or her toward doing well or poorly, depending on what he or she encounters in school. If we apply this idea to the issue of language differences, Ogbu maintains that cultural ways of speaking represent "Black collective identity." For historical, social and cultural reasons African Americans, particularly youth, are not willing to give up their way of speaking. For many, including parents, teaching students to speak standard English represents one more intrusion by White man into their world. This relationship between language and collective identity among Blacks involves two conflicting beliefs. Ogbu maintains that African Americans hold these dissonant beliefs about standard English--which they may not fully realize. Helping students explore this conflict serves, I think, to educate and empower them as bidialectal speakers. We must sensitively assist students and their parents in understanding that mastering Standard English does not have to be detrimental to their cultural identity or sense of loyalty to their race (Ogbu, 1995). I speak from personal experience. I may "talk white" but remain fiercely proud of my African American heritage.

It is evident that issues emanating from language differences are quite complex. Prudent, sensitive educators are those who skillfully utilize this information to sharpen their sense of awareness, and establish a sound knowledge base on which to build ongoing insights.
With sound theory and a heightened sense of personal blind spots, educators are now more prepared to consider instructional issues.

**What instructional steps can literacy teachers take to support the Ebonics speaker?**

Dandy (1991) recounts a story of Joey, an African American third grader who is asked to read by Alice, a white student teacher. Joey is in the highest reading group, and will read with Alice in a demonstration lesson for her supervisor. As Joey begins to read, it is evident that he is a dialectal speaker; he pronounces street as "skreet." Alice responds "not skreet, Joey, say street." Joey says "skreet." Alice again interrupts Joey when he mispronounces the word a second time. As he reads on, he reads about a cat who "skretched" out... Alice says "No Joey. You're doing it again." Joey repeats "skretched"; Joey's voice becomes more quiet, and he finally stops because he's lost his place. Sims (1972) reviews the idea of miscue (mistake) quality. "A miscue(mistake) that doesn't cause a loss of information or interfere with the originally intended meaning of the passage is high quality (meaningful and useful). . ." Johnson (1975) calls this "alternation skr for str a dialect shift-a translation without a loss in comprehension." I believe that teachers need to understand that constant interruptions for mispronunciations break the flow of the story line, and erroneously stress reading as a sounding out process. Much more importantly, it demoralizes children. Krashen (1987) in his studies of second language acquisition refers to an "affective filter" that operates when a student is "over anxious about his performance... (causing) a mental block... (which) will prevent the input from reaching those parts of the brain responsible for language acquisition" (p. 232). When students are constantly corrected, the affective filter gets raised which causes them to become self-conscious and monitor their speech making talking difficult. Generally, it is nearly impossible to apply or monitor language for rules while speaking or reading. Typically, silence results as the teaching example with Joey illustrates. In contrast to spontaneous oral language or public reading, writing seems to lend itself more to opportunities for editing, which doesn't damage the spirit of a child. It is a mediated process allowing for reworking before there is public display.

Dandy (1991) offers eight instructional strategies, based on Taylor's work (1986) that enable teachers to provide learning opportunities for students to develop communicative competence in standard English while preserving the home dialect.

1. Maintain a positive attitude towards one's own language [and others]
2. Use books, stories and poems that are written in standard English as well as in various dialects
3. Encourage students (older) to recognize, label, contrast distinctive features of various dialects.
Provide instruction that highlights underlying meanings/intentions associated with particular dialect forms i.e. bad=good, mean=impressive

Teach students (by modeling) to recognize situational rules of communication i.e. greeting friends vs. greeting prospective employer.

Teach students (initially via scripts) production of certain grammatical forms in structured situations i.e., she ain't here vs. She's not at home right now.

Allow students to practice standard English use in controlled situations (no script) i.e. retell stories read, drama presentations

Celebrate demonstration by students of increasing communicative competence in spontaneous real life experiences

While the above suggestions can assist all teachers in the more general area of communicative skills, Labov (1979) provides suggestions aimed at improving the practice of reading teachers.

Teachers should distinguish between mistakes in oral reading and differences in pronunciation.

Teachers (early grades) should be willing to accept homophones in the speech of young children. This acceptance preserves confidence in the phonics code and facilitates learning without "affective filters."

Teachers of spelling may find it necessary to spend more time on grammatical inflections i.e. he walk yesterday

Teachers (early grades) must know the system of homophones used by BEV speakers and the grammatical differences that separate their own speech from that of the child.

If teachers are unaware of homophone differences and insist on forcing what they deem "proper" pronunciation, children may lose confidence (typically in third and fourth grades) refusing to read and remaining essentially nonreaders (Labov, 1979).

Conclusion

At this point in time, I too hold the "different" view espoused by Dandy. That is, Ebonics is a dialect of English. Students who speak this way must be sensitively taught to code switch by teachers who acknowledge and accept the child's home language. It is incumbent upon us as teachers to assist students in becoming bidialectal speakers. To do anything less is to miseducate a child. These strong views arise out of my reflections on the words of David Wood (1988):

No one dialect of English, in any linguistic sense, is superior as a means of communication to any other...Although dialects and creole vary in pronunciation and grammatical structure (due to their distinct historical origins) they are no less
grammatical than Standard English. All languages, dialects and creole are governed by rules of grammar...they are all 'equally' grammatical...the fact that one way of speaking is viewed as superior, more intelligent or more 'proper' than another is not a linguistic phenomenon, but a political, social and economic affair. A particular way of speaking has become dominant because those who speak it have risen to power, and control functions like education, mass communication and the means of production. (p.92)

It is imperative that teachers develop new ways of thinking about diversity. A teacher's major role is that of a communicator. Educators must be able to communicate meaning across individual differences. This complex task involves interaction across issues of race, culture, socioeconomic status and power. All demographic data points to the fact that the United States is becoming a nation characterized by diversity as never before. What can educators do? What should we do? I recommend that we must first look inward and develop a sensitivity to issues of language differences. From there we can gain helpful insights and knowledge which allows us to view diversity as a resource not a barrier: Following this we can build an arsenal of understanding that equips us as culturally sensitive communicators and problem solvers.

I hope that the energy educators have expended to eliminate Ebonics will be redirected towards supporting its historical, cultural, social and linguistic utility. By implementing approaches that assist students in becoming bidialectal, we equip African American children to become skilled participants at any table of opportunity in mainstream America. As Spanish is valued by most Hispanic Americans and Yiddish is for Jewish Americans; as French is to Haitian Americans, so Ebonics is to most African Americans. While we teach students to value standard English as the language of commerce, access, power and intergroup communication, we all should strive to learn more about the cultural value of Ebonics or Black Communications (Burnett et al., 1997; Dandy, 1991).

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His-panics and Mine

Angela María Pérez-Mejía

Like most stories mine starts at the beginning, when the question of my identity in terms of belonging to a particular race group started for me. At the beginning I really did not know the thing about myself, which everyone learns just by my opening my mouth. I am Hispanic. And I am not of the type who grew up here and could eventually aspire to be Surgeon General. No, I am of the kind that causes panic: would do anything for a green card, has a myriad of cousins back home trying to follow in her footsteps and will never stop saying "estation" and "eschool." I am of the kinds who will always "espeak" funny.

To accept what is known about me just by opening my mouth took me some years at school and a lot of juggling of terms. The first time I was confronted with the terminology, from which I was to choose my label, I had just arrived in this country and was struggling to understand a registration form for an English language school. One of the questions offered some boxes with the names of different races from which I had to choose one. Once I eliminated those I obviously was not, like Asian, African-American, or others I did not even understand (like Caucasian), I was left with three categories to choose from. The first one I eliminated was Hispanic, since I knew very well I did not come from Spain. The second I rejected was white, because even though my lack of melanin has always embarrassed me at the beach, I always had the feeling that white meant blonde. I was left with only one box and very sure of myself I marked Native American. I was totally sure I was born in America, excuse me, in the Americas, I know how to say it now.

Soon after I learned, of course, what I was supposed to mark and then I started learning the real content of these terms and how little they had to do with my real racial configuration and how much they had to do with social constructs. At first I understood that race could mean something different depending when and where you are and what you need. On one hand, there is academia, and a constant questioning about race and representation, the realization that there is not such a thing as an identity but rather the overlaying of roles one is assigned to and roles one chooses. In combining those roles there is confusion and there is also a range of possibility. American academia started me thinking again about identity with the same eagerness I had for the subject at age sixteen. Here the obsession was race, what haunted me then was class.

Soon I also realized that in American academia I am read as a container of race and I am expected to perform that role and think from that point of view. Sometimes it is flattering, sometimes it is burdensome, and sometimes it is boring to be forced to be a Latina when
one may be thinking about not being much. In every school I have been at I have been asked to do this talk, to reveal myself in public, to explain the ineffable, to make transparent to others what is a kaleidoscope for me, to justify why I speak funny and yet insist on exercising my right to speak.

Being a teacher has thrown me another curve, this time from the other side of the field. Let me speak for instance about teaching "Latin American Culture," as they call it, to American students of Latino origins. In the beginning my task seemed very clear. I was going to open the doors of Latin America for them, so they could better understand their identity as Latinos in the U.S. I was not that clear anymore when two students showed me the problems involved in my philanthropic task. Victor from the South Bronx, whose only language was Spanglish and was desperate in his freshman year while failing English and failing Spanish, could not care less about Bolivar and the Aztecs. He thought I wasn't qualified to teach a course for Latinos because I could not walk freely in the South Bronx. I was not authentic enough for him. Victor taught me there was a universe separating him and me. He made clear for me that even though we have to choose the same box in the application forms we do not belong to the same experience. Victor made me think that race is a place where sometimes you are put and sometimes you put yourself. His place was 138th St. My comfortable place was representing diversity in academia. The other student was Ver—nica, a short dark woman whose parents had escaped from El Salvador during the worst years of war. One day in a heated discussion about race, several of her classmates were arguing that no one could put you down unless you allowed them to do so. Veronica stood up furiously and told them to look at her face, there was not choice for her, she carried it on her skin: "Hay unos que la llevamos encima," she screamed at them while slapping her cheeks. Veronica thought there was actually just one race, the dark race, while others were viewed as not belonging to a particular race. Now I question the implications of being a teacher for Latino students: at times I am a role model, at times a foreigner speaking for them with a funny voice, at times someone who feels so far away from what they want me to represent. At times I feel they are just like everyone else here, they tamper with my dearest treasure: my language.

As a teacher of Latinos and non-Latinos I feel yet another pressure of representation. They all want me to correspond to whatever notion of being a Latino they created or were handed down, but they are not expecting me to break beyond it. To represent is also to be deprived of choices, to be afraid of not being what is acceptable by others' expectations. It is also the fear of disappointing the group that considers me their own. By choice I am a feminist and students are often scared by the mere mention of the word. By nature I am outspoken and strong. Students find that intimidating, or so they say. Because of my personal history I have a lot of anger; they often find that inappropriate for the salsa-dancer, beans-eater, marriage-oriented, sweet nice Latina I am supposed to be. They may want me to be a Latina, but they do not always want me to be a Latina feminist, they get
scared by it. When I rebel against something or align myself with other women, people doubt me as a pure Latina. Or they question my having come here in the first place. Among other things, I sense that everyone expects me to be grateful for being here, thankful for having the opportunity to be far from my dangerous third world home. But for me it is not always clear that being away is the best choice and the everyday can be tiring and lonely. I have grown so exhausted of translating myself to everyone, of always using a borrowed language, of not being as witty and quick as I can be in Spanish, of always sounding funny.

Those are some of my experiences in academia, but the outside world is another totally different experience. Most people tell me I do not look Latina at all, and they say it thinking that they flatter me. But their opinion soon changes when they learn I am Colombian, which produces their worst panics. Even the most sophisticated people seem unable to resist saying, "Ah, the Medellin cartel," and that is supposed to inform me of how well versed in international politics they are. Not to mention the taxi driver who did not hesitate to ask me if I could get him some dope and then thought I was a snob for not bothering to answer him.

I also know very well there is a place where everything is determined by the little ethnic box which I now mark without hesitation; it is the immigration office. There they have the real power to have an impact in my personal life. There everything becomes clear-cut. I am strictly Hispanic, his most furious panic. There, I am yelled at and abused for being so. There, there is no analysis, no middle ground, no class difference, and no points of view, no taking or rejection of identities. They know all too well, I'd better behave as my little square says, otherwise they just do not sign, and my future depends on that signature. Lining up at an immigration office makes years of academic questioning collapse in front of me.

Things change, and race is a place which can move. It is a set of fears you produce in others, a frontier of expectations. When I go back home I become increasingly white for the people over there. The longer I stay here the whiter they see me there, to the point of my mother's neighbors asking me if my stomach can take fried plantain. The longer I stay here, the more I understand that regardless of my academic questioning, I am Hispanic. More and more I take my place in this society obsessed by pure definitions and identities. I have learned that I have to play with the set given to me if I want to get by. But playing with it is playing with fire and that brings my panics to the stage. I fear that I might learn my place far too well and forget to question what is expected of me in that role. I fear I will fall into the binary oppositions encouraged by the frenzy of defining oneself. I fear forgetting to honor the places which are, unknown to me, the mystery of being oneself, the silence between the adjectives that helps to define oneself. I fear the limitations of identity and forgetting that, after all, the only absolute certainty I have is being Josefina's daughter.
The slender girl sat in front of a computer, wrestling with swooping sentences running Faulkner-like down half the page, describing Cambodian festivals, fireworks, long, fragrant evenings, and telling stories of her childhood: Once, for lack of diligence in school, her mother beat the soles of her feet with a bamboo stick (permitted in her culture, she explained). Arriving home, her father ordered his wife to bathe his daughter's feet and never to strike her. A sweet memory--she had shone in Father's eyes, the beautiful father who had died in the war. Of the war years, she said little: her family languished in a relocation camp; there was never enough food. Some weeks, her face bleak and stiff, eyes dull, she would tell me about not eating, not sleeping. It might have been midterm exams that ignited dreams, sounds, whirling thoughts, disabling her for days. It might have been--nothing at all--that we could see. I heard from her once after graduation; then the news that she had taken her life. She had wanted to write powerful English with no errors; she had wanted to be a doctor. I remember the beautiful young woman, determined, brightly laughing.
I remember the sleepwalker, remote, wooden,
horrors swirling just behind the eyes. I remember
how deeply she felt the gaping loss of her father,
who had named her -- Leakhena -- "Perfection."
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