

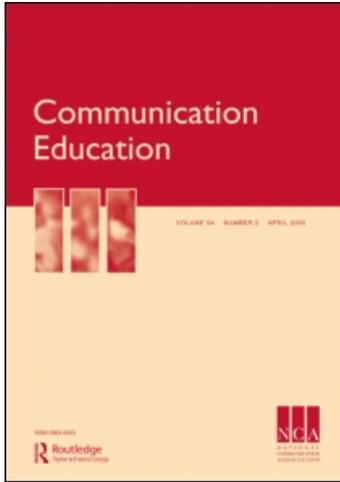
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Publisher Routledge

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Communication Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713684765>

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To cite this Article Hendrix, Katherine Grace, Jackson II, Ronald L. and Warren, Jennifer R.(2003) 'Shifting Academic Landscapes: Exploring Co-Identities, Identity Negotiation, and Critical Progressive Pedagogy', *Communication Education*, 52: 3, 177 – 190

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/0363452032000156181

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0363452032000156181>

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Shifting Academic Landscapes: Exploring Co-Identities, Identity Negotiation, and Critical Progressive Pedagogy

Katherine Grace Hendrix, Ronald L. Jackson, II and Jennifer R. Warren

After reviewing issues of The Speech Teacher and Communication Education from inception through 2003, the authors note the absence of any prolonged, systematic investigation of the influence of race or the interplay of multiple cultural identities in academic settings. This introductory essay articulates the importance of acknowledging the existence of multiple identities in our classrooms (some visible, others not) and assessing our biases towards these cultural markers as we teach our courses. Critical pedagogy is offered as a viable option allowing educators to function as change agents deconstructing and replacing restrictive pedagogy with more progressive approaches to teaching and conducting research. **Keywords:** critical progressive pedagogy, cultural contracts theory, identity negotiation, multicultural education, postsecondary teaching

In the 51-year history of this journal, over 35 articles have been published addressing classroom pedagogy and native-born students of color.¹ These articles fall into the following categories: (1) Alaskan native, Native American, and Puerto Rican students; (2) Black students—with an emphasis on nonstandard dialects in the classroom; (3) the “disadvantaged” or “at-risk” student; and (4) the diverse and multicultural classroom. At first glance, the number of articles may appear impressive, but from the vantage point of persons of color—although there was more scholarly work addressing issues of race and ethnicity than we anticipated—my coauthors and I were not quite so impressed. Perhaps our hesitancy is, in part, influenced by the fact that there is no clear program of research that consistently acknowledges the changing demographics within the educational system even as we enter a new millennium. When reviewing the journal’s history, Sprague (2002) notes that the journal has not progressed forward “issue by issue,” but in somewhat of a cyclical pattern, we have “revisited topics again and again” (p. 339). As we canvass past issues in regard to identity matters, we only see periodic sparks of light.

Since its inception, editors and guest editors have guided the publication of special issues and symposiums addressing a wide spectrum of topics—from meeting problems of rising enrollment (Robinson, 1958), to Black perspectives on speech

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education (Smith [Asante], 1970), to managing multicultural communication education (Casmir & Ratliffe, 1991), to instructional research focusing on the teacher (Staton & Rosenfeld, 1992). During the past decade, special issues included: successful teaching stories (Rosenfeld, 1993), the Internet (Phillips, 1994), literature in performance studies (Trank, 1996), the women's university (Kramarae & Trank, 1996), graduate education (Clark, 1997), communication instruction around the world (Clark, 1998), undergraduate communication education (Clark, 1999), textbooks in the basic communication performance course (Rubin, 1999), communiology (Ayres, 2000), technological advances (Krueger, 2001), and the communication curriculum (Backlund, 2002). In addition, December 2002 served as a special 50-year anniversary issue under the editorship of Joe Ayres (2002).

While these articles and the major programs of study (e.g., power in the classroom, immediacy, student/teacher motivation) show promise for significant improvements in the theoretic foundation of communication education as well as praxis, the majority of the research still does not address how the multiple identities of professor/teacher and student are negotiated on a daily basis in ever-changing U.S. American classrooms. As a result, this research fails to accurately depict the multidimensionality of the classroom setting. Ellison's (1952) *Invisible Man* is particularly significant with respect to our personal perspectives on pedagogy. He writes:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. (p. 3)

When the multiple identities we bring to the classroom are not acknowledged and appreciated, this sense of invisibility is felt. Sharing the same anniversary year as *The Speech Teacher*, 51 years later, Ellison's work speaks to the alienation Ron, Jennifer, and Katherine often feel as Blacks in a career (collegiate teaching) and an area of expertise (communication) that remains predominantly White (Wilds, 2000). For example, Katherine and Ron represent two different life stages. As Katherine and her husband, Keith, watch their children looking forward to graduating from college and moving into professional careers, Ron and his wife, Ricci, are busy attending school plays and sports activities, chaperoning field trips and assisting their children with nightly homework. Despite their different stages in life, the above quotation still speaks to both authors (Hendrix, 1994, 1999; Jackson, in press). Race is but one of our coidentities, yet it is of critical importance in our interactions with others, since our phenotypes clearly mark us as being of African descent. Particularly based on U.S. American notions of racial hierarchies, this brings us into a complex system of daily interactions with our colleagues and students where we prepare not only by reviewing course content but also by reflecting upon and analyzing how our cultural worldviews are juxtaposed against those of our colleagues and students (Hendrix, 2001).

Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) capture this experience for Black students when stating:

African American students at predominantly white institutions often do not receive full recognition and respect from many white students, teachers, advisors, police, and other campus personnel. This white failure to recognize is very serious, for it teaches lessons of out-of-place-ness and self-worthlessness to black students. We use the term *misrecognition* here in the sense of a failure to see who or what is actually there. (p. 15)

Despite the tendency to "misrecognize" faculty and students of color within U.S.

educational institutions, Weinstein and Obear (1992) contend “expectations are increasing for faculty not only to be sensitive to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism, regardless of their academic specialization, but also to treat these issues as part of their teaching responsibilities” (p. 39). These two scholars further note the importance of faculty being willing to “anticipate and monitor” their personal biases as part of the lesson preparation process. When reflecting on his teaching/training experience, Weinstein said, “even though I come into the classroom as a professional teacher, I do not leave my social identities at the door ... I need to monitor the gaps in my knowledge and sensitivity, areas in which I still have ignorance, fear, and uncertainty” (p. 42).

Whether one is a critical theorist, cognitivist, social scientist, or rhetorician, student (and teacher) identities are a critical focal point for educators seeking new and innovative ways to teach in racially heterogeneous and homogenous classrooms. In a recent *Communication Education* special issue, Phil Backlund (2002) appropriately asked, “What should we teach and how should we teach it?” In this special issue, we explore pedagogical strategies and solutions that will help the field answer two questions: (1) Do cultural identities (e.g., race, gender, age, physical ability, social class, sexual orientation) matter when developing our best teaching and learning practices? (2) If so, how do we account for these differences in the classroom and curriculum? The ultimate task is to address the problems and constraints related to multiple identities coexisting within classroom contexts, while commenting on practical ways that identities may be celebrated and valued via effective teaching and learning-centered approaches.

Over the past decade, the importance of reflecting on our intrapersonal selves, as manifested in the classroom, and the ways we perpetuate societal values have also been noted by instructional communication scholars. According to Galvin (1999), in our role as teachers, we offer content expertise, manage learning, provide evaluation/feedback, serve as personal models, and socialize students “to an entire field and to models of thinking” as well as “exert influence regarding social values” (p. 251). Consistent with Staton’s (1999) ecological model of teaching, Galvin discusses how our classroom teaching is influenced by both internal (e.g., personality and upbringing) and external (e.g., student, peer, and administrative expectations) factors. Although Galvin does not explicitly discuss the classroom as a nexus where identities comingle, she does mention the importance of understanding that “interface issues” naturally occur as we teach. When explaining interface issues, Galvin indicates that strong “linkages” (bonds) to our students can exist, or may well be absent. In other words, Galvin acknowledges that, as educators, we can be especially attracted to, irritated by, or indifferent toward particular students, and she goes on to state, “these powerful, emotional reactions to a student signal an internal conflict and a need to consider whether the problem lies in the student or in *yourself*” (emphasis added) (p. 254). Of course, as noted by Weinstein and Obear (1992), determining the source of the interface issue may be quite complex as the tendency to be attracted to or withdrawn from one’s students (and vice versa) may lie in the negotiation of multiple identities filtered through our cognitive schemas which convey the appropriate means of interacting with this “type” of person based on personal, in-group, and societal perceptions of the individual in question.

Staton (1999) contributes a macroview (“ecological”) to this reflective process that encompasses analyzing not only the relationships between and among individuals in the classroom but also considering their immediate and larger environmental

settings including their departments, colleges, and campuses. Therefore, student/teacher relationships are far bigger than classroom interaction; they are impacted by the departmental, institutional, and societal climate. Per Staton, in order to make sense of the university teaching experience, we must understand physical and social settings in three contexts—the classroom, the educational institution, and society. In the latter case, Staton refers to the physical location (e.g., region) of one's educational institution and the social expectations associated with teaching and learning within a U.S. American college/university where both a manifest (academic content) and a hidden curriculum (social content) are taught.

Our current discussion of negotiating identities is enhanced by expanding Staton's definition of "society" to include a consideration of hegemonic structures that influence hierarchies of "acceptable" people, lifestyles, and worldviews. This deeper analysis then would lead us to consider the critical rhetorical messages conveyed during our teaching that emanate not only from what we choose to teach and discuss but also from the perspectives that are not included in our readings and discussions or not in any integrated, substantive manner. This particular level of analysis would include considering not only what we teach based on personal preferences and campus expectations but what our discipline has socialized us to perceive as legitimate knowledge.

When calling for comprehensive theories of communication pedagogy and envisioning a research path for communication education scholars, Sprague (1993) stressed the importance of recognizing the relationship between communication and power (including the power we hold as educators) and understanding that speech is tied to cultural and personal identity. Although Sprague focused on communication scholars, it is, of course, imperative for all educators to recognize the interplay between ways of speaking, cultural identity, and hegemonic notions of appropriate speech. We believe that educators cannot effectively teach students if we fail to consciously reflect upon how, why, and for whom we design our overall departmental curriculum and the corresponding individual course content. Do we design our courses (and our research) with minimal attention to explicit discussions of cultural markers and hegemony? Do we speak of some distant "other" while quickly moving on to safer territory? Do we ignore who we are and how our worldview influences the content of our courses from the textbooks, readings, and films selected to which aspects of our students and our own identities we are willing to acknowledge? In essence, are we teaching mainly within our comfort zones for ourselves and those who look like us (doing them a disservice by failing to prepare them to successfully interact in diverse society) while neglecting the (ir)relevance of the information to the daily lives of our students whose upbringing and life experiences may not parallel our own? If we fail to acknowledge the influence of our own identities and comfort levels as we teach, it is not surprising that these unreflective processes can be seen in our communication education and instructional communication research.

As educators and communication scholars, in particular, we are well aware of the influence of in-group expectations on our communication with others, and we are equally aware that in-group expectations influence how (even whether) we converse with members of perceived out-groups. If we are uncomfortable interacting with physically challenged individuals as we run our day-to-day errands, what miracle transpires that allows us to bracket those sentiments when we have such a student enrolled in our course? In spite of our disciplinary content expertise, we enter the

classroom with all of our human frailties and biases—as do our students. Many intercultural communication texts explicate how the perception of difference and high levels of uncertainty will move us toward those who appear “similar” to us and away from those we perceive as “different” (see Calloway-Thomas, Cooper, & Blake, 1999; Dodd, 1998; Gonzalez, Houston, & Chen, 2000). Contributing to the development and success of all of our students requires conscious reflection and soul-searching in our lesson preparation, curriculum development, and the very research we conduct which ultimately informs our teaching. Katherine’s pastor, Reverend Bethel Harris Jr., of Zion CME Church, Memphis, Tennessee, frequently states the idiom, “If you know better, you outta do better,” and so it is with the professionals within our discipline and education in general (personal communication, 2003). What we know about the changing demographic landscape of this country and effective, confirming communication should be reflected in our classroom teaching, interactions with students and colleagues, and our research programs. For example, *Included in Communication: Learning Climates that Cultivate Racial and Ethnic Diversity* (Trent, 2002) is evidence that at least a contingent of the communication discipline is working to improve the educational experience for all of our students.

As he took the helm of *Communication Education*, Don Rubin, underscored the importance of such work by communication education scholars when he mentioned that:

Theories of identity have advanced well beyond simplistic notions of ethnicity or gender or nationality as static attributes that indelibly label individuals in each of their interactions. Rather, individuals construct their social identities in contexts by means of linguistic and nonverbal performance. Social identities are thus negotiated in interaction, and instructional settings are key sites for such identity performances ... [these] interactions are important resources for helping learners acquire the communication skills they need for competent performance of identity, especially the skills they will need to accommodate to unfamiliar communities of discourse. (2003, p. xi)

The importance of educational practice coupled with awareness and understanding of human difference cannot be overstated. It is absolutely naive for us to believe that we, or our students, enter classrooms across the world tabula rasa. Instead, as Livingstone and Sawchuk (2000) have noted, it is more critical “to understand people as embodied, active subjects exercising reflective and interpretive agency in the concrete world ... ‘arriving’ at the encounter with their own bags of experiences, tastes and preferences” (pp. 131–132). This same general rule also applies to instructors and institutions. It is precisely an individual’s experience in tandem with the human capacity to coproduce one’s environment that complicates and ignites the possibilities for a critical progressive pedagogy.

Critical Progressive Pedagogy

“Critical pedagogy,” “participatory democracy,” and “liberation education” have each become increasingly common terms that signify paradigms established in response to restrictive pedagogies and politics of academia that interfere with agency. There seem to have emerged at least two ideological camps in the study of communication pedagogy: critical pedagogy and restrictive pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is more liberal and progressive, and as a result appears more daring. For example, a communication scholar-teacher in this camp is likely to have students critique oppressive structures within academic institutions and then create public or

classroom dialogue about these issues. A restrictive pedagogy would define parameters for critical discussions and is unlikely to turn inward and interrogate academic institutions with respect to perceived oppressive tactics. Restrictive pedagogies usually include conservative discussions, which accentuate what academic institutions do well, seldom calling into question harmful educative practices. Critical pedagogy is important because of its focus on education as a whole, rather than education as a series of curricula, teacher–student interactions, academic plans of study, or institutional goals. A principal distinguishing characteristic of critical pedagogy is its immediate emphasis on dominant versus nondominant academic practices. While some scholars argue that critical pedagogy *has done something to make* academia political, progressive critical pedagogy scholars maintain that academia is already inherently political, and critical pedagogy is only one tool for understanding the dynamics of this brand of politics.

It is rather peculiar and paradoxical that an institution that stands for freedom of thought and recognition of ontological difference would be plagued by a legacy of restrictive pedagogy. Of those who have written about this legacy, Paulo Freire is among the most stalwart scholars. As educational philosopher Ronald Glass (2001) notes, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire spoke fervently about the political forces at work that “press U.S. public education toward ever more narrow and conservative agendas, thus inscribing and justifying poverty and powerlessness ...” (p. 15). Critical pedagogy is often articulated as simply a set of discourses concerning the barriers present within educational contexts; however, Freire poignantly argues for a holistic perspective that accounts for the total human being as a member of communities and institutions and as an individual with a personal, social and cultural history that gets introduced in their pedagogy. So, it is not that conservative voices should not be heard, but that they are typically the *only* voices represented in curricula and pedagogy, and this has strained U.S. public education. Critical pedagogy places value not on individuals as automatons, but rather as social actors and sometimes as change agents (Freire & Ramos, 2000).

When social actors or change agents enter the classroom, according to critical pedagogy scholars, the only way they will have a liberatory experience is if the pedagogy employed allows and encourages continuous productive dialogue (hooks, 1994). Unfortunately, the average student has not come to expect opportunities for expansive dialogue or recognition of their identity. Naturally, this sort of recognition is ideal; average students are trained simply to want information fed to them so they can memorize it and recite it later. That information may be introduced in a restrictive context. Certainly, pedagogy is more complex than just engagement of students. There are conservative scholars who teach using interactive techniques and critical, progressive scholars who lecture. The point we are making is that critical pedagogy transcends the classroom environment and permeates thinking.

In a restrictive pedagogical atmosphere, cultural practices and student struggles over meaning do not intersect. The common problem of stifled consciousness or uncritical exploration of everyday discourses is the epicenter of restrictive pedagogy. Critical pedagogy scholars are aware of this concern and seek to uncover and deconstruct this in multiple ways. There are at least three primary concerns of critical pedagogy scholars: curriculum, agency, and identity negotiation. We will discuss how these touchstones are entwined and then introduce the cultural contracts theory that frames this discussion and is the impetus for this special issue on identity negotiation.

Curriculum and Agency

Postmodern curriculum theorists and gender pedagogy scholars (Giroux, 1991, 1997; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 1993; Lather, 1991; Slattery, 1995) suggest that power plays a vital role in the classroom and curriculum. Power sustains privilege in vivid and tragic ways to the extent that marginalized group members are uninvited to participate in what the academy represents unless they forfeit their desire to have their identities affirmed by the academy via institutionalized practices and/or curricular reform (McIntosh, 1994). As a result, these individuals are forced into negotiating their identities with others. As with most identity negotiations, a struggle over maintaining agency in order to define the self ensues, and the outcomes have the potential of being quite deleterious. Slattery (1995) articulates this idea best with respect to curricular concerns:

If the curriculum ignores sedimented preceptors, identity formation, and social construction and suppresses individual visions and dreams in the content and context of education, and if individuals are constantly required to conform to someone else's worldview, then either dreams will be repressed, hope will be suppressed, people will incorporate the other's vision of themselves into their own self-understanding, and/or they will lash out in anger against those systems that exclude their voice (p. 135).

Slattery further contends that some curricula seem to prematurely dismiss the possibilities of real change by professing universal truth claims. He suggests that sometimes scholars get caught up in Western logos and seem to forget that other perspectives matter, or even that other perspectives exist. This ideological subordination is a catalyst responsible for recycling oppressive pedagogies. Like Slattery, we recognize some clear weaknesses and assert that the extant traditional pedagogical paradigms are limited with respect to acknowledging multiple identities and must be radically reformed.

Critical Pedagogy, Identity Negotiation, and Cultural Contracts Theory

Critical progressive pedagogy focuses on a recognition and understanding of identities as well as democratic practice in educational contexts (Freire, 1998; hooks, 1994). The key word is "identities." Every individual has multiple identities, but often times for the sake of simplicity, only the most salient ones receive attention, such as those related to race, class, gender, or sexual orientation. The danger in this, Shapiro (2000) maintains, is that our identities are not "ontologically pure" (p. 66) or mutually exclusive categories. Identities are sometimes "complicated" and "contradictory" but should be considered valuable even as we social actors are wary that they may "fix us in a particular mode of behavior or affect—the result of a specific play of power and knowledge" (p. 66). It is through our multiple definitions of the self that we are connected to the world, and conversely, the world is connected to us. So, it is as though we have developed an agreement with the world around us. In this arrangement, we have agreed to share who we are if the various individuals and collectivities in the world will share with us who they are, and most importantly, we will affirm one another's existence (Giroux & McLaren, 1993; hooks, 1994). When operating according to this cocreated contract, all parties enjoy a fruitful relationship consisting of innovative possibilities and free-ranging thought; however when an institution or individual reneges on this contract, affirmation is no longer rendered, and identities are dismissed (Jackson, 2002). Consequently, individuals are seen no longer as persons with life histories that should be valued, but rather as fixtures in institutional

settings. Students become objects that are acted upon or inoculated with ideas rather than active participants with important contributions and experiences.

Davidson (1996) admits that the politics of identity are often practiced in the classroom, and there are theories, approaches, and strategies, which are gradually being brought to bear to alleviate this problem. For example, in Davidson's (1996) book, she explores ways in which students have empowered themselves and consequently countered identity politics by resisting social categories, changing academic institutions, and shifting transcultural realities. These self-empowerment decisions reflect identity negotiation in progress. One paradigm that helps to explain identity negotiation and that is the impetus for this special issue is cultural contracts theory (Jackson, 2002; Jackson & Simpson, 2003). Cultural contracts theory is based on three premises or axioms about the processes and/or outcomes of identity negotiation engagement (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003): Identities require affirmation; identities are constantly being exchanged; and identities are contractual. There are three cultural contract types: ready to sign, quasi-completed, and cocreated contracts, respectively. Metaphorically, each contract type is a result of how identities have been personally and socially constructed and explored.

Ready-to-sign cultural contracts are prenegotiated, and no further negotiation is allowed. These contracts are designed to promote assimilation or maintain one's own worldview. "Signing," or relational coordination, may or may not be the goal. Those who seek to introduce a ready-to-sign contract are often firmly entrenched in their own perspective and are not interested in others' worldviews. They presume conformity with certain values or patterns of communicating. They take their cultural understandings into every encounter and have no interest in learning about other cultural traditions, values, norms, and beliefs. As the most rigid of the contract types, the ready-to-sign cultural contract is the type that dominant groups often "hold in their pocket." Dominant groups almost instantaneously, and often subconsciously, present ready-to-sign contracts to marginalized group members.

The next contract type is the *quasi-completed cultural contract*, which is partly prenegotiated and partly agreements to relationally coordinate one's identities with those of another. This is perhaps the most common type of cultural contract, although they represent ordinarily short-term or temporary episodes of identity shifting. People code switch every day when they go to work or school, or participate in formal public events and activities. "Signers" of the quasi-completed contract are usually not ready to fully cocreate and not necessarily ruling out maintaining their own worldview. These persons "straddle the fence" in terms of their commitment to relationally coordinate. They would rather maintain some measure of comfort with their environments and worldview. Arguably, some quasi-completed contacts are "signed" as self-protection in order to avoid stress (Jackson & Simpson, 2003).

Finally, *cocreated cultural contracts* are fully negotiable. Cocreated cultural contracts are the social agreements that affirm us as cultural others, and they provide a means of relational coordination across cultures and signal that the relationship is fully negotiable and open to differences. If a cultural contract is cocreated, there is full acknowledgement and valuation of cultural differences. Cultural differences are not ignored, yet do not become the only reason the two relational partners are together. Signing this type of contract indicates an openness and embrace of other ways of seeing the world. The emphasis is truly on mutual satisfaction rather than obligation to one another or each other's respective cultures. At the same time,

cocreated contracts are behavioral. That is, a mere talk about harmony and cohesiveness does not manifest into a cocreated contract; one must also demonstrate the unconditional appreciation and valuation of the other person. All three cultural contracts are about relationship coordination.

As communication scholars, we have the wherewithal to effectively coordinate our relationships and understand interactional dynamics in the classroom and curriculum. Yet, we are situated at the periphery of this national conversation about critical progressive pedagogy with only a few scholars exploring this nexus between education and critical practice on a national and international level; however, this volume offers substantive critiques and strategies which can be used to enliven the ongoing debate and shift how communication scholars and students see cultural diversity. Diversity is an identity issue, and therefore a structural and relational one. It suggests that one's self-definition is distinguishable from others and that enhances, rather than subtracts from the overall mission of the university as a community of citizens decidedly committed to progress and the preservation of integrity. Critical pedagogy scholars such as bell hooks, Henry Giroux, Joe Kincheloe, Patrick Courts, Patrick Slattery, and others have successfully vied for a position in the debate on multicultural curriculum development and reform, postmodern literacy and instructional practices, and radical pedagogy. They have taken the lead as they theorize about oppressive pedagogies (Freire, 1998; Freire & Ramos, 2000), border pedagogies (Giroux, 1991, 1997), politeracies (Courts, 1997), and postformalism (Kincheloe, 1993). Now, we must continue by developing relationship-centered progressive pedagogies tailored for communication curricula, classroom, and research.

Introduction to the Issue

In light of this need to develop progressive pedagogies, we offer the following exemplars of the complex comingling and negotiation of multiple identities in classrooms. Every article in this special issue acknowledges some aspect of racialized selves influencing classroom interaction (with the exception of Wood and Fassett, who do not foreground race), but other coidentities given explicit focus are gender, age, nationality, sexual orientation, and social class.² These categories of coidentities vary in the amount of emphasis placed on them in each article but, collectively, provide a "thick description" of identity factors influencing the negotiation process. Each of these scholars has found qualitative methodical approaches useful in explicating multiple identities in the classroom and exploring the nuances associated with biases within oneself and others, and how they manifest themselves in the context of the academy.

This issue begins with an essay by Henry A. Giroux entitled, "Spectacles of Race and Pedagogies of Denial: Anti-Black Racist Pedagogy Under the Reign of Neoliberalism." Giroux brings an interdisciplinary perspective to this thematic issue while maintaining the understanding that identities are cocreated during interaction with others and that "language is more than a mode of communication or a symbolic practice that produces real effects, it is also a site of contestation and struggle." Moreover, Giroux addresses the "changing nature of racism" as a pedagogical issue and, in opposition, proposes an antiracist pedagogy. He selects as his focus a Black-White racial dynamic that is seemingly passé, but then launches a critique against such an assumption as he explains the "new racism" laced in

restrictive pedagogies and neoliberal attitudes. In this article, Giroux outlines a “pedagogy of denial” contingent upon neoliberal structural and material practices motivating the privatization of discourses on race. The principles of neoliberalism deny the ethical issues associated with racism by positioning racism as an “individual prejudice” or “psychological disposition.” As evidenced by neoliberalists’ attention to the seemingly endless representations of successful Blacks, human agency is conceived merely as a need to “pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” and Giroux believes this diversion works to disavow “the operations of power through which racial politics are organized and legitimated.” Color blindness is also a pedagogical strategy used to privatize race by implying a level playing ground, and as a result, governmental legislation is used to thwart racial injustice. Giroux proposes an “anti-racist pedagogy” which serves as a vehicle for democratic values, deconstructs the “power of persuasion” in racial representation within education, and offers a language to vocalize and critique the modern forms of racism that often elude critical symbolic representation in the public sphere.

Patreece R. Boone, in “When the ‘Amen Corner’ Comes to Class: An Examination of the Pedagogical and Cultural Impact of Call–Response Communication in the Black College Classroom,” explores the dynamics of collaborative learning and the negotiation of coidentities within the classroom at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Boone’s ethnography of communication highlights professor/student reciprocal learning, as performed through a traditional Black speech pattern known as “call and response.” As a teaching strategy, call and response are purposefully used in a space where virtually all participants share racial identity. By focusing on the negotiations of coidentities shared by the professor and students (e.g., race, gender, and class), the practice of call and response is understood as supporting and affirming such coidentities. Further, for Boone, this language use encourages a communication climate, based upon cooperative learning that provides a safe place for student interaction.

While investigating their approaches to team teaching, Julia R. Johnson and Archana Bhatt parallel Boone’s themes of reciprocal learning and collaborative classroom environments. The scholars describe “Identities and Alliances in the Classroom: Formations in Resistive Space” as an autoethnographic case study of an intercultural communication class where the researchers attend to the complex nature and intersections of multiple and collaborative identities. As a “critical-interpretative study,” their analysis focuses on teaching “alliance building,” and these scholars articulate the complexities associated with team teaching and the relationships they attempt to build with themselves and their students. This article explains navigating the “binary logics” associated with lesbian/heterosexual, White/Asian, professor/student identities to undermine the assumptions of power and privilege that typically constrain ways of enacting, knowing, and teaching gender, race, and sexual orientation. The decision to radically center their own identities challenges their students’ beliefs and creates a “resistive space,” that opposes “the discourses of domination that structure our understandings of identity and difference.”

In “Pedagogy, Performance, and Positionality: Teaching About Whiteness in Interracial Communication,” Leda Cooks elaborates on this critique of power and privilege by exploring whiteness in an interracial communication class. Cooks uses the concepts of “positionality and performativity to discuss the shifting articulations of White identities in relation to whiteness as a pedagogical concept.” After acknowledging that coidentities such as gender, class, and ability combine with race

to “form systems of meaning,” Cooks chooses to explicate the invisibility of whiteness. In a class that is 78% White, Cooks draws upon critical pedagogy, the pedagogy of discomfort, and the pedagogy of performance to address race in her course. Her goal is to construct a pedagogy of whiteness, which encourages students to think about what it means to be White, in addition to considering the “constraints of whiteness.” According to Cooks, not only must we encourage our students to explore their whiteness, but we must facilitate White professors to do the same.

“Performing Race, Culture, and Gender in an Indigenous Australian Women’s Music and Dance Classroom,” by Elizabeth Mackinlay, presents an autoethnography in which MacKinlay critically reflects upon the negotiation of “multiple identities” and “betweenness” she experiences as a White professor teaching an Indigenous Australian Studies class, as a White woman married to an Aboriginal man, and as a mother to a mixed heritage child. Offering insight into the ability to be White when one chooses, MacKinlay discusses the effect of White power and privilege on a woman whose self-avowed identity is multidimensional. She additionally notes the ways in which whiteness complicates the intersection and communication of race, gender, and culture in the classroom. Even though her educational institution endows MacKinlay with power over discourse and the representation of otherness within the class, she perceives teaching as being “about negotiating personal, familial, and performance relationships in [the classroom] setting to fulfill the roles, obligations and responsibilities that accompany each of those relationships.”

Emerging from a 6-month ethnographic study at an urban high school, the work of Amada J. Godley looks at how in-class literacy practices serve as a means for students’ negotiation of gendered identities as influenced by race, class, and other social identities including “popular,” “debater,” and “athlete.” In “Literacy Learning as Gendered Identity Work,” Godley draws upon social constructivism, feminist poststructuralism, and sociolinguistics to focus on both written and oral literacies as a means for students to explore “various gendered practices and their effects” in addition to how their personal interests are served. Studying an 11th grade English honors class, with a diverse student enrollment, the identities of one White male and a Korean female form the basis for Godley’s analysis. Both students reveal that the “discursive and interactive nature of identity work” is highly complex, contextual, and fluid.

Moving from the traditional classroom to cyberspace, Andrew F. Wood and Deanna L. Fassett’s “Remote Control: Identity, Power and Technology in the Communication Classroom” delves into the establishment and negotiation of power via on-line chatrooms and e-mail. An autoethnographic analysis of their experiences with instructional technology draws attention to the often-neglected “nuanced treatment of student and teacher identity” and the “overlapping potentials of discipline and resistance.” Using Foucault and de Certeau to situate their work, Wood and Fassett capture key pedagogical moments in computer-mediated communication that mark the ways that power functions in the classroom as an ideology enacted through the body. When the body is mediated through e-mail or an on-line chatroom, power is displaced, and the policing of students’ bodies becomes more problematic.

Focusing primarily on praxis, Fred Fitch and Susan E. Morgan also remind us of the power held by U.S. American undergraduates. These scholars address U.S.

American undergraduate student perceptions of international teaching assistants (ITA) in their essay titled, “Not a Lick of English: Tensions Between the Negative and Positive Identities of the ITA.” To understand “identity formation and the multicultural classroom,” their close narrative analysis draws attention to student-based themes providing rich commentary on issues of race and nationality. Their analysis uncovers issues of teaching assistant preparedness and the manner in which ITAs’ identities are maligned by their undergraduate students. In their estimation, there is an “opportunity for multicultural leaning” that can be realized only by universities improving ITA training and teaching students how to appreciate diverse identities.

This issue concludes with a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning essay entitled, “Impacting Student Perceptions of and Attitudes Toward Race in the Interracial Communication Course.” Here, Tina M. Harris explores her approach to teaching interracial communication and its influence on the reduction of “racial prejudice and [in] promoting racial sensitivity and awareness among undergraduate students.” Harris analyzes student narratives and focus groups, attending to the experience and enactment of race in relational communication. When teaching, her objective is not to focus on course content but, rather, to highlight the experiences her students have about race while creating and participating within a dialogue with each other. Through encouraging a “safe space” in the college classroom, Harris shares the positive effects of her pedagogical approach including her own negotiations when addressing “students’ self-awareness and their role within the cycle of racism.”

Contributions of This Special Issue

Earlier in this essay, we articulated our concern regarding the tendency of communication education scholarship to appear as sporadic flashes of light that quickly dissipate. As one reviews the history of this journal, research has certainly been published addressing students of color and other coidentities such as gender, age, and sexual orientation. However, our research only occasionally takes into account the complexities of the classroom. Our hope is that this particular special issue on identity negotiation in the classroom will motivate educators to systematically and programmatically investigate the changing—student and teacher—faces and life experiences that now gather together in the same classroom setting.

Although there are exceptions, a typical publication still presumes a White classroom and White professor. Implicitly generalizing based on data gathered in predominantly White classrooms from somewhat captive students in undergraduate general education courses is no longer acceptable without discussing the limitations of the findings. If our work is to have meaning, we must contextualize our findings and, at the very least, acknowledge the potential existence of alternate experiences and interactions. In addition, our classroom studies must incorporate not only the identities of our students but also those of the teacher and researcher. Claiming that we cannot adequately research participants who are not like ourselves or that we fear repercussions from doing so are no longer legitimate excuses for failing to more thoroughly investigate classroom dynamics.

This special issue: (1) reminds us of the existence of multiple identities in the classroom; (2) moves us to reassess the complexities of classroom teaching given the changing composition; (3) acknowledges how imperative critical pedagogy is to the growth and betterment of our professional/personal lives as practitioners and

scholars; (4) warns of the necessity to be diligent in serving as a catalyst for change rather than (consciously and unconsciously) reenacting and reinforcing various forms of societal prejudice during our interactions with students and colleagues—e.g., racism, ageism, sexism, ability issues within our classrooms and research programs; and (5) underscores our obligation to train ourselves and our students (undergraduate and graduate) to think beyond the White classroom experience—even in the absence of obvious diversity.

It has been a decade since Casmir and Ratliffe (1991) coedited the provocative, enlightening special issue on managing the multicultural classroom. We implore you not to let another decade go by without a concerted effort moving us toward a more thorough explication of the complexities of the classroom stemming from the negotiation of multiple identities.

Notes

¹ A title search was conducted on all of the articles published in the *Speech Teacher* and *Communication Education* from 1952 to 2003 with an eye to titles containing terms such as African American, Asian American, Black, Filipino American, Intercultural, Multicultural, etc. Each article identified through this process was then reviewed. We fully understand that every article published in this journal addressing students and professors of color may not use descriptors in the title that would cue the reader to the demographics addressed within the article; however, we believed this process would provide us with a strong sense of what research, in this area, has been conducted by communication education scholars.

² We recognize the salience of physical ability in the negotiation process, even though no articles in this particular issue speak to that aspect of identity negotiation.

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