



## The Other in Self: Acknowledging Complicity in Multicultural Education

Jenna Min Shim  
The University of Wyoming

In this essay, employing Bourdieu's sociological theory, in particular, his concepts of reflexivity, symbolic violence, and materialist models of the subjects and Dubois's construct of *double consciousness*, I discuss and analyze the dilemmas that I experience as a racial minority teacher educator in my effort to practice self-reflexivity in my own multicultural teacher education classrooms. In doing so, I demonstrate empirically the forceful and involuntary presence of the dominant Other that underwrite my consciousness demonstrating the danger involved in automatically assuming an *insider* status solely by one's heritage. I attempt to show the power of unexamined beliefs that constrain multicultural teaching practices against the status quo and the importance of critically examining beliefs in changing teaching practices. My ultimate hope for this self-inquiry is that the result of this work could extend beyond self-improvement to impact and advance the scholarship of multicultural teaching and learning.

*Keywords:* critical self-reflexivity, symbolic violence, materialist models of the subject, double consciousness, multicultural education

There is a wide recognition that educators of color bring unique educational perspectives to teaching and learning. This is particularly true in the present time in which schools and societies are increasingly becoming diverse in many places in the world, and yet the gap between the demographics of the teacher population and student population is ever widening (e.g., Philip, 2011; Dingus, 2008). Numerous academics of color have made significant scholarly contributions to the field of education despite prevailing Eurocentric frameworks. In this regard, Foley, Levinson, and Hurtig (2000-2001) have identified four major contributions made by scholars of color as follows: (1) scholars of color have disrupted "deficit explanation of the lower achievement rates of students, teachers, and parents of color . . ." (p. 80); (2) scholars of color have assumed and shown the success and capacity of students, teachers, and parents of color; (3) scholars of color have documented which "pedagogical and curricular practices help marginalized students, teachers, and parents produce success" (p. 80); (4) scholars of color have advocated multiple

decolonizing and collaborative research approaches which contributed to research methodology. What this means is that the influence of the counter-hegemonic voices of academics of color in transforming white dominated field of education is undeniable.

### **Scholars of Color and the Need for Critical Self-Reflexivity**

While strongly arguing for the impossibility of the field of education as where it is currently without "the powerful voices and ideas of insider/native" researchers, Foley, Levinson, and Hurtig (2000-2001, p. 79) also deconstruct the notion of *insider*. These researchers explain that because researchers' social, racial, cultural, and political locations are not outside of their research and pedagogical practices, a clear divide between *insider* and *outsider* is not possible. Therefore, it is most likely that researchers of color who is considered as *insiders* are also *outsiders* and are speaking in a hybrid voice.

The problematizing of the clear distinction between *insiders* and *outsiders* is not new. Spivak (1988) has argued that we are all "subject effects" (1988, p. 204)

who are positioned in a variety of discourses inescapably; therefore, our personal and institutional interests are unavoidably entangled which are written into the representations of individuals. In analyzing the works of Spivak (1988a, 2003) and Kapoor (2004) notes that “acknowledging complicity” (p. 641) is one of the most prominent tenets in Spivak’s works. Kapoor (2004) highlights the importance of hyper-self-reflexivity in Spivak’s works. Indeed, Spivak (1988a, 2003) notes the necessity of aligning work done with subaltern studies with her own practice of deconstruction. More specifically, Spivak (2003) discusses her own privileged position as an academic in the West (Columbia University in New York) and the need to deconstruct one’s implicated-ness in dominant systems of knowledge and representations by “othering ourselves” (p. 622).

This essay is an effort to build on and extend the argument presented by Spivak (1988a, 2003) and join the commitments of other scholars of color (Asher, 2001, 2005; Gay, 2003; Hoffman, 1996; McIntyre, 2002; Nagata, 2004) who have done critical self-reflexive work to further push the field of education toward more equality and equity. I discuss the struggles, conflicts, and dilemmas that I experience as a racial minority teacher educator in my effort to practice self-reflexivity in my own multicultural teacher education classrooms. In doing so, I demonstrate empirically the forceful and involuntary presence of the dominant other that underwrite my consciousness thereby demonstrating the danger involved in automatically assuming an *insider* status solely by one’s heritage. My intention is to go beyond personal confessions and self-indulgence and provide insights into doing critical self-reflexivity and acknowledging complicity in relation to teaching multiculturally oriented courses. I aim to explore and expose the degree to which I as an educator of color at times silence myself at the same time resist to the dominant ways of practicing multicultural pedagogies through doing critical self-reflexivity. My ultimate hope for this self-inquiry is that the result of this work could go beyond self-improvement to impact and advance the scholarship of multicultural teaching and learning.

In this paper, I borrow Spivak’s (2003) idea on “othering ourselves” (p. 622) as a primer for practicing self-reflexivity. Also, considering that self-reflexivity is a much used but under defined term (Maton, 2003; Pillow, 2003), I define self-reflexivity broadly as an act and enactment, not just knowledge and commitment. More specifically, I envision self-reflexivity as extending beyond a mere acknowledgement of one’s social, racial, cultural, and political locations to an understanding the effects of these locations on an educator’s current pedagogical practices. I also believe the goal of multicultural education as working against inequality and inhumanity linked to the system of domination and foregrounding social justice (Banks, 2004; Delpit, 1995;

Gay, 2000; Kumashiro, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2000; and Sleeter, 1996). The common ultimate purpose in doing self-reflexivity and multicultural education at a broader level, then, is to have a social effect.

This paper is grounded in the following premises: (a) being members of the dominated group does not automatically bring about insights into historical realities and the basis for oppression (Dubois, 1903/1994; Luke, 2004), (b) acknowledging complicity is a requisite in unlearning one’s inevitable dominant ways of knowing (Spivak, 1988a, 2003; Kapoor, 2004); and (c) reflexivity as an instrument that allows uncovering of social roots in an individuals’ worldview and tapping into histories embedded in people’s unconscious is a potential starting point for individual and social change (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990, 1991, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

In the following sections, I discuss the conceptual frameworks that undergird this essay: Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984, 1990, 1991, 1998) sociological theory, in particular, his concepts of reflexivity, symbolic violence, and materialist models of the subjects as well as Dubois’s (1903/1994) construct of *double consciousness*. Yosso (2005) expressed concerns for the works of Bourdieu mainly because his perspectives are from a white heterosexual male, and I agree with her concerns. However, I employ some of Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts to think my way through my pedagogical practices in this study because some of his theoretical constructs are extremely helpful when applied to race, ethnicity, and culture (Cicourel, 1993), and I believe this is especially true with his notion of reflexive practice. Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990, 1991, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) argued that self-analysis allows a possible social change and given that I see the goal in doing self-reflexive work in multicultural education to ultimately have a social effect, Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984, 1990, 1991, 1998) concept of reflexive practice seems very applicable for this essay. Bourdieu’s (1998) concept of symbolic violence is helpful for this essay because it explains the complicity of one’s involvement with domination which is the concern also emphasized by Spivak (1988, 1988a, 2003). I also employ Bourdieu’s (1996) materialist models of the subjects in my discussion about my effort to be self-reflexive and work against the system of domination and how the anticipated consequences of such an effort in my tenure and promotion process at times has a strong grip for me to free myself from a preoccupation with my job security. I use Dubois’ (1903/1994) concept of *double consciousness* to explore my thoughts, actions, and consciousness that underwrite them as a teacher educator of color in my own classroom – my classroom that is in a broader sense “a social context structured mainly by dominant linguistic and cultural norms” (Carter & Kumasi, 2011, p. 72). I then briefly outline my personal background to

contextualize this essay. Next, I summarize my beliefs and knowledge about doing self-reflexivity in multicultural education contexts. What then follows are discussion and analyses of my own struggles and dilemmas in doing self-reflexivity in teaching multicultural teacher education courses. In the final section, I discuss the implications for multicultural education drawn from a close and careful monitoring of doing critical self-reflexivity in multicultural teacher education courses that I teach.

**Conceptual Frameworks: Pierre Bourdieu and W. E. B. DuBois**

**Pierre Bourdieu: Reflexive Practice, Symbolic Violence, Materialist Models of the Subject**

Wacquant (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) notes that “if there is a single feature that makes Bourdieu stand out in the landscape of contemporary social theory, it is his signature obsession with reflexivity” (p. 36). Bourdieu (1990, 1990a, 1991, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) argued that the mind is the internalization and embodiment of the social world. He explains that people are not the sole authors of their perceptions, thoughts, and actions because they are all inescapably constituted within a variety of historically constituted social and political fields. For Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), these social structures and orders are not consciously mastered but deeply internalized through every day practices to the extent that “the world has produced me because it has produced the categories of thought that I apply to it, that it appears me as self-evident” (p. 128). In other words, the consistency between objective social structures and embodied structures creates an illusion that the existing hierarchical social orders in regards to social class, race, gender, and language, for instance, appear natural as they become internalized not only in the members of dominant group but also dominated group. In turn, according to Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), unquestioned, uncontested, and unconscious acceptance of the daily life universalizes, obscures, and perpetuates the existing systems of inequality. In this respect, Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) concept of *symbolic violence*, “the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (p. 167), shows the ways in which people’s daily practices foster the embodiment of domination within themselves and other people because they accept and experience the dominant values currently utilized in the social field as legitimate—the legitimacy that reproduces the system of domination.

Although Bourdieu has been criticized by many critics for being too deterministic (e.g., Alexander, 1995; Elster, 1981; Jenkins, 1992), Bourdieu’s arguments support otherwise. According to Bourdieu (1984), while *habitus*, “system of durable, transposable dispositions,” that is “progressively inscribed in people’s minds” through practical interaction with external social structures are resistant to change (p. 471). *Habitus* is not

the fate and it can also be transformed through socio-analysis in a form of self-work that enables the individuals to gain an understanding of his or her dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990, 1990a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). What this means is that the self-reflexivity involves the analysis of “social and intellectual unconscious embedded” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 36) in individual. Moreover, by making objective social rules and norms embedded in individual’s mental structures the object for analysis and thus transparent, the process which Bourdieu (1990) calls *objectification of objectified*, the re-objectification (Luke, 2004a), the social change, is possible. Bourdieu’s (1990, 1990a) sociological focus is that reflexivity, i.e., *objectification of objectified*, is the only way to work against determinations that bear durably on individual’s practices and thus on a possible freedom from these determinations. In other words, the more individuals become aware of the social within them by reflexively questioning their categories of thoughts and actions, the less likely their thoughts and actions are to be determined by the external social orders. Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) construction of symbolic violence together with reflexivity is employed in this essay because the concepts disrupt the belief that intention, knowledge, commitment for self-reflexivity guarantees transcendence of the effects of social orders. These concepts can also illuminate ways that doing self-reflexivity can bring consciousness at least some of the social constraints that impose on individual’s thoughts and actions.

Moreover, incorporating Bourdieu’s (1996) construct of materialist models of the subject to self-reflexivity adds another layer of complexity involved in enacting self-reflexivity because it establishes the limit that materiality imposes on people’s choices on their actions, i.e., the extent to which one can practice self-reflexivity. From a chapter of *The Rules of Art* entitled “The *Habitus* and the Possibles,” Bourdieu (1996) wrote:

The propensity to orient oneself towards the most risky positions, and especially the capacity to hold on to them in the absence of any economic profit in the short term, seems to depend in large part on the possession of significant economic and symbolic capital. In the first place, this is because economic capital ensures the conditions of freedom from economic necessity. (p. 261)

As Bourdieu (1996) argued, in modern society social relationships are mainly relationships of economic and political struggle. Hence, the extent to which educators can enact self-reflexivity in education can largely be impacted by conditions of economic and cultural conditions.

**W.E. B. DuBois: Double Consciousness**

DuBois’s (1903/1994) concept of *double consciousness* compliments and further complexifies

Bourdieu's notions of self-analysis and reflexivity. In particular, using *double consciousness* as the lens through which to explore doing self-reflexivity helps to explain the psychological tension and conflicts within myself as an educator of color in practicing self-reflexivity. Also, theorizing *double consciousness* in this paper explains the perception of myself who is inevitably fabricated in the system of domination as well as accommodates the one of the premises of this study, namely Spivak's (1988a, 2003) argument about acknowledging one's own complicity as an academic of color. Du Bois' (1903/1994) described the Black experience of *double consciousness* as follows:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. . . One ever feels his twoness, -an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strings; two warring ideals on one dark body. . . The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, -this longing . . . to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for American has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro souls in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. (p. 3)

Here, Dubois (1903/1994) introduces the notion of multiple, complex, and conflicting identities of the Blacks who measure themselves and their capacity by what white people think about them. He shows the core beliefs that Blacks hold about themselves in relation to white people. In other words, despite the desire to sustain the identities of old selves as Africans, the Blacks have low self-esteem and the feeling of inadequacy because of how whites view them. Several scholars have noted that *double consciousness* continues to be a prevalent factor in the lives of African Americans and other people from other historically marginalized racial groups (e.g., Kumasi, 2012; Lyubansky & Eidelson, 2005).

DuBois's (1903/1994) concept of *double consciousness* and Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) concept of symbolic violence both allow an exposure of how teachers from historically marginalized racial groups, not only teachers from dominant group, are implicated in reproducing dominant ways of knowing. However, Dubois's (1903/1994) concept of the two-ness in which he describes the experiences of African Diaspora in the history of slavery provides an insight into doubly divided psychological effects of racism and domination. While the members of oppressed racial group have unique perspectives about the system of domination not visible to the members of dominant group, they also experience self-hate because they look themselves through the gaze of the dominant other.

In her study, Willis (1995) studies the literacy experiences of a third grade young African male employing DuBois's (1903/1994) concept of *double consciousness* to illuminate the social and psychological effects of the system of domination on how this student read the world of literacy through the dominant ways of knowing and sees his own cultural practices as illegitimate. Willis (1995) suggests that literacy educators must attend to double personhood of students from historically marginalized group as a resource in school literacy practice to broaden the scope of literacy practice beyond "a Eurocentric literacy canyon" (p. 37). Carter and Kumasi (2011) also used DuBois's (1903/1994) concept of *double consciousness* to study how some Black youth interact and negotiate their identities during the book club activities and discussions. They conclude that DuBois (1903/1994) notion of *double consciousness* as a lens helped them to *re-search* and *re-see* (Cartner & Kumasi, 2011, p. 88) the Black youth's sense making of the book discussed and their identities as they navigate dominant White and Afrocultural ways of knowing.

In this paper, in using DuBois' (1903/1994) notion of *double consciousness* I hope to understand both limitations and potentials in doing self-reflexivity as a teacher educator of color. More specifically, I hope to explore the social and racial limitations imposed on me as a teacher educator of color by understanding the important psychological manifestations of *double consciousness* in my own classrooms. I also hope to discuss the potentials of doing self-reflexivity work that become visible through the exploration and understanding of the limitations in doing self-reflexivity for educators of color.

### Personal Background

I am a Korean American, and my family immigrated to the U.S more than thirty years ago. Growing up, I was often the only racial minority student in my classrooms. My memories of childhood include wanting to give up who I was in order to be like other students: I disliked being different in the ways I looked and spoke from my peers. Currently, I am an assistant professor on a tenure track working as a teacher educator at an institution in a state that is populated predominantly with European American. I am in my fourth year of teaching at the institution, and I have had approximately three hundred prospective teachers in my classes. Among those three hundred students, I have had less than ten racial minority students in my class all together. I have the responsibility for teaching the courses that focus on diversity to include ethnic, linguistic, and racial issues, and not only I see myself as a well-positioned person to take on such a responsibility, but I am also committed in working with the European American prospective teachers to help them examine their viewpoints about diversity. This commitment largely stems from my belief that these prospective teachers will better be prepared to

work more productively with their future diverse student populations if the teacher education courses provide them with the context in which they can make visible and challenge their own racially privileged locations.

Meanwhile, I am also realizing that critical conversation about inequality and inequity linked to diversity is much easier to have when I am in a room full of people who too are committed to the same issue. During my graduate school years, I engaged in numerous conversations about the issues related to various inequalities that exist in the field of education. These conversations were with other graduate students, professors, and many others I met at different educational conferences over the years. The conversations were always heated, exciting, stimulating, energizing, and most of all, they felt empowering. When I took a job as an assistant professor shortly after graduating, I was committed to making the differences in students' mind. As many literatures would suggest, my goal in multicultural education courses that I teach is to provide the contexts in which students are able to shift their consciousness. I thought I was a well prepared multicultural educator. I thought I had the knowledge I needed to engage my students in critical self-reflexivity. However, despite my unquestioned commitment and enthusiasm for reflexive work, as I enter my fourth year of being an assistant professor, my experiences of trying to be self-reflexive only further begs questions about *how* the state of *doing* self-reflexive may be achieved to go beyond just *talking* and *thinking* about self-reflexivity. I am realizing that the road to doing self-reflexivity is not without consequences, dilemmas, contradictions, struggles, and exhaustions.

#### **My Beliefs, Intentions, Commitment, and Knowledge about Self-Reflexivity**

I believe that self-reflexive work particularly in multicultural education must be empowering (Nagata, 2004). I also agree with Bourdieu (1990a) who noted that "the analysis of mental structures is an instrument of liberation" (p. 16) and that reflexive practice should lead to a vehicle to reveal the system of domination. Shor and Freire (1987) define empowerment *not* as "private notions of getting ahead" but rather as one's ability to use one's "recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment" (p. 23). Adapting Shore and Freire's (1987) notion of empowerment and seeing self-reflexive work in multicultural education as an instrument of liberation, I believe that self-reflexive work in multicultural education must extend beyond intellectual musing and self-assuring move for individuals. I am committed to doing self-reflexive work as a teacher educator of color by turning gaze inward to myself and recognize that I influence my students' perceptions. Perhaps more importantly, I am committed to doing self-reflexive work that would enable

me to engage in critical dialogues that would provoke my students who are mostly European American to make visible and disrupt their worldviews and recognize the need to reorganize the current systems at a fundamental level. This belief, if it is realized, in a long run, can put a significant dent in the current educational systems. As van Dijk (2008) notes, the members of dominant group have more access to power in terms of discourse production, and thus, the European American prospective teachers can have a greater impact in serving as an impetus for institutional change.

#### **Struggles, Dilemmas, Conflicts, and Exhaustion: Limitations in Doing Self Reflexivity**

In actuality, I am painfully learning that my beliefs, intentions, commitment, and knowledge about self-reflexivity in the ways I described above are just not enough. Using the a few examples of my experiences in multicultural education classes that I teach in which I am often "righting wrongs" (Spivak, 2004, p. 523), I illustrate how I tacitly reinforce the European American ways of thinking that reflect the dominant norms despite my resistance and otherwise intentions. Having undergone socialization in both racial minority and white world, the system of subordination and domination, against my will, I sometimes support rather than undermine the dominant linguistic and cultural system that I intend to work against in my pedagogical practices.

#### **Standard English**

At the beginning of each semester in teaching the multicultural teacher education courses, I often find myself announcing to the students that I speak English as a second language. I tell my students that if my accents get in the way for them to understand me, I would not be offended at all if they ask me to repeat myself. This is ironic announcement as I have lived in an English speaking country for over three decades. While I speak English with a noticeable accent, I seldom if ever, encounter situations where I am not understood by others because of my accent. So, what elicits such a grand announcement at the beginning of a semester? This seemingly innocent and reasonable statement represents the dominant Other within myself when I look beneath the surface of the announcement.

Cognitively, I realize the relationship between Standard English and neocolonialism/ imperialism (Thiong'o, 1986; Kubota & Lin, 2006; Rhedding-Jones, 2002). In my academic work, I firmly support the idea of many different forms of English in global culture. However, when reading between the lines of the announcement, I also know that I am apologizing to the students for my ways of speaking. Rather than seeing such an apology entirely as a conscious act, Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) concept of symbolic violence gives a way into seeing my privileging Standard English and devaluing English with an accent as an effect of (neo) colonial trajectories (Thiong'o, 1986; Kubota &

Lin, 2006; Rhedding-Jones, 2002). Without being hyper-reflexive about my own complicity in the legitimation of Standard English, I am not able to assist my students deconstruct the underlying ideologies about historically and socially constructed dominant model of English i.e., Standard English.

Moreover, DuBois's (1903/1994) concept of *double consciousness* helps to explain how I identify with myself because I perceive my ways of speaking through the dominant linguistic system. That said, reinforcing Standard English not only denies my accent and intonation as legitimate but also who I am. Apologizing for the way I speak also means I am ashamed of the way I speak and who I am. This is true even as I am ashamed by the shame I am feeling. For instance, in the broader world in which Standard English is privileged and looking at myself through the dominant linguistic system, I feel inadequate, ashamed, and incompetent in speaking English with an accent. There is a degree of self-hatred involved in this, and this involuntary psychological manifestation of self-hatred is very forceful and powerful even as I am committed in doing critical self-reflexivity in my multicultural teacher education courses. If these feelings and actions were a matter of conscious choice, the problem may be easier to solve. Quite contrarily, these feelings resulting from viewing myself as I might be perceived by the dominant others are deeply ingrained and are very difficult to overcome. If unnoticed and if the feeling of shame is taken for granted, such self-sense of inferiority and the need for an apology will continue to reinforce the dominant linguistic system.

Furthermore, particularly if not reflected and acknowledged, the effect of symbolic violence and *double consciousness* in how I view myself and my ways of speaking English is the notion of Standard English as the only legitimate and correct form of English that gets reified in my daily educational practices in multicultural education that conceals the neutrality of Standard English. I do recognize that theorizing *double consciousness* and symbolic violence does not always imply a shift in my pedagogical practices in multicultural classrooms and how I feel about myself. However, it does provide an indispensable analytic framework for understanding why I, an educator of color, who is committed in working against the system of domination silently advances Euro-centrism through the internalized belief on and feelings about the authentic way of speaking English. Psychologically, there are often intense tensions and conflicts within myself who have the views of the dominant and dominated. The danger, as Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) noted, is that symbolic violence works "almost wholly behind the backs" (p. 145) and "from below" (p. 167) in the ways that I unconsciously desire the conditions imposed on me by the system of linguistic dominance. However, it is through

the practice of critical self-reflexivity around my pedagogical practices in multicultural education courses, I come to realize how my practices are situated in society, recognize the dynamics of oppression, and question the consequences of my behaviors and actions in multicultural education. More specifically, through the practice of self-reflexivity, I come to realize how my ideologies pertaining to Standard English is a product of the broader social contexts. Moreover, without my effort to engage in self-reflexivity and assuming that my beliefs about Standard English is a universal truth can only hinder critical multicultural education that aims to dismantle the dominant ways of knowing.

### **Reversed Racism**

The most frequent and consistent topic that gets brought upon in my multicultural teacher education courses is the notion of reversed racism. Many students express their frustrations about what they perceive to be the marginalization of whites because the privileges that are given to racial minorities. The most recent example is one student's comment about the unfairness involved in the invitation extended to African American children to visit the White House by President Obama because such an invitation excludes the white students the opportunity to visit the White House. Another popular comment is the ineligibility of white students in receiving scholarships because of the preferences given to racial minority students.

The literature suggests that these kinds of stories around reversed racism are common narratives among white students when they encounter the topic of race and racism (King, 1991; Thompson, 2003). The literature also suggests that the attitudes that underscore such stories are self-centered and justify societal oppression and inequity. That stated, students' such stories can serve as an excellent basis to engage in a *critical dialogue* (hooks, 1994) in which students are able and encouraged to deconstruct their assumptions.

However, actually doing so in my pedagogical practices is not without a challenge. I am constantly torn between my commitment as a self-reflexive and critical multicultural educator and my desire to keep my students happy. I find my ability to be straightforward to the students' comments that I see as oppressive or just plain wrong is considerably constrained, and I am in a continual dilemma in deciding how to respond to the students. At times, when I bring myself to respond to students in the ways that might help them disrupt their thinking, I sense students' defensiveness, and I back off. My concern for offending students at times limits the conversations that occur in my classroom.

One student in the most recent course evaluation for a multicultural education course I taught commented:

This course was pointless. It did nothing to help my education as a teacher. I think

focusing on white privilege is divisive rather than unifying and is counterproductive to the course. (Anonymous, 2012)

The student's discomfort and dislike for the discussions on *white privilege* translated to the course being *pointless* and doing *nothing* for the student as a future educator. Thompson (2003) explains that "whites are uncomfortable with the implications of acknowledging white racism because they want to be seen as good people and "need is often more apparent among white college students who are first beginning to struggle with the implications of racism" (p. 8). Thompson (2003) continues to explain that for the white students to realize that people of color can make judgments about them based on their race and assume that they are racist can be devastating. In relation to the foregoing comment, the topic of *white privilege* may have threatened the student's need to be *seen as a good person* and thus her comment appears to be a defense against her need, discomfort, and devastation in her possible realization with her implication of racism. That stated, the importance of discussions on *white privilege* and deconstruction of students' assumptions become clearer in the face of the goals of self-reflexivity and multicultural education. While I am frustrated and even angry by the comments such as the one above, navigating my way through a racist discourse as a person who is product of racist discourses is not always obviously simple.

Although not for certain, I speculate that this student also marked low numbers in the quantitative section of the evaluation. Bourdieu (1996) argued that economic capital ensures *the conditions of freedom* from the material necessity for one's survival. In my case too because most I do not possess significant amount of economic and cultural capital not have to worry about material necessity, I feel that I am often caught in infinite cycles of struggle where I must often resign to retreating to safe positions constructed within already established orders. This dynamic, I dare to speculate, is the one that mostly likely cross most junior academics. In this regard, Bruner's (1986) description of the researcher *not* as "an individual creative scholar, knowing subject who discovers" but as "a material body through whom a narrative structure unfolds" (p. 150) resonates. As an untenured faculty member, I must confess that what is at stake for me is the course evaluations that have a direct impact on how my work is evaluated. In other words, while it can be said that the student's comment such as the one above may index the fact that I am disrupting students' thinking, the effects of their judgments about the course can at least partially impact my tenure promotion process in the long run. Bourdieu's (1996) materialist models of the subjects gives an insight into how the extent to which an educator, especially as an untenured academic of color critical of systems of domination, can

go against the grain is not entirely disconnected from the possession or loss of capitals.

The painful question that arises now then is this. Am I really critical of a system of domination and can I really call myself an educator committed to critical pedagogy when I am at times allowing students to silence me in order to attain tenure? Am I not supposed to confront the structural racism in my classrooms when the students' stories aforementioned do mask the system of domination and existing inequality? Am I not supposed to fight back and talk against the stratified power relations ingrained in students' (un)consciousness? In theorizing *double consciousness*, there is a degree of feeling inferiority in me when standing in front of a classroom full of white students. This shows that the stratified power relations are ingrained not only in students' consciousness but my own as well. However, analyzing my pedagogical practice and my effort to be self-reflexive partially explain the difficulties in doing reflexive work as an educator of color because the manifestation of the effects of social, racial, political, and economic discourses that are prominently present become visible. This in turn serves as a reason to continue struggling and working toward practicing being a critical scholar rather than believing that I have arrived as a critical scholar. I often silence myself even in the face of being self-reflexive in my multicultural education courses, and yet, being self-reflexive helps me recognize the limits of practicing self-reflexivity as well as the limits underlying my own views as an educator of color. Moreover, without the benefit of understanding the limits of my views and practices and how my they often perpetuate as opposed to resist dominant systems, I am better able to see the effects my internalized beliefs and actions have on students in multicultural education. In effect, my inability to be self-reflexive serves to limit the possibilities inherent in multicultural education courses.

### **Other Stories**

Although I highlighted the two classroom experiences above as exemplars to illustrate how I inadvertently reinforce and legitimize white supremacy, there are plenty of other occurrences in my multicultural education classrooms where I constantly struggle between being self-reflexive to work against the systems of domination and remaining silent to keep my students happy. We spend couple weeks on linguistic diversity in my multicultural education courses, and when I invite the students to share their thoughts on English language learners and their academic achievements, most students view English language learners' home language as a hindrance to their learning. A student stated:

I think that the biggest problem for English language learners is their parents letting them speak Spanish at home all the time. I know it is the easy thing to do, and the nice thing to say

“oh it’s okay at home.” But, how is talking to the kids in Spanish helping them? Unless your kids are having a meltdown, their parents need to at least try to speak English to them. I think that is the biggest obstacle because, without having these kids learn English, they cannot learn in school.

Each semester there are numerous comments very similar to the one above made by students in my multicultural education classes. Here is another statement made by a student:

The parents, teachers, and students must realize the importance of being competent in English and not use so much Spanish. Otherwise, the students will be missing out on all sorts of opportunities. When you go to university, they are not going to translate for you. It’s not like a professor will say, “Oh, I am sorry you don’t speak English, and here is a Spanish version of biology. We will cater to all your needs.” That’s just not going to happen. If you work at McDonalds, the customers are not going to speak Spanish to you.

These students see English as the only legitimate knowledge/language in American society, which would allow English language learners to be successful. Like most students, the above students both believe that the use of students’ home language interferes with students’ academic success. Moreover, for these students, there is no room for a multilingual society in which many different languages are valued and respected. There are empirical evidences indicating that allowing English language learners to use their first language produces a positive, rather than negative, effect on individual learning (De Angelis & Dewaele, 2009). While I do disrupt my students’ assumption about English language learners and the use of their home language in my classes, when the students become defensive and adamant about their beliefs, it becomes more difficult for me to continue challenging them for the same reasons I have described in my above examples on Standard English and reversed racism. For instance, looking through the lens of DuBois’ (1903/1994) *double consciousness* and Bourdieu’s (1990, 1990a) notion of symbolic violence, as a second language speaker of English, disrupting my students’ perspectives on English as the only legitimate language in American society at times is extremely difficult as I too have a tendency to have the same beliefs that are held by my students. However, being self-reflexive about my difficulties in pushing my students against what they believe to be absolute truths helps me move closer to actually challenging my students despite the challenges.

#### **Implications and Discussions: Possibilities in Doing Self-Reflexivity**

Although it is a reality, to state that we live in the racist world of inequality and inequity is extremely

difficult. To realize and confirm all the psychological, physical, physiological, material tolls that racism takes on people of color is also extremely difficult. To state that people of color actually perpetually the very racism that takes severe tolls on themselves is unbearable, and this is what I have described in this paper. However, my purpose in analyzing such unbearable stories in doing self-reflexivity was certainly not meant to be a victim narrative, a mere self-revelation or be deterministic. Rather, it was to understand more fully the process involved in doing self-reflexivity as an educator of color in a predominantly white institution and question the naïve idea that I can just do critical self-reflexivity as a matter of will. I wish to state my recognition that the examples and their analyses in this essay are based solely on my personal experiences and that they cannot be generalized. That said, the claims made about enacting self-reflexivity of educators of color in the following section are largely indexical, but I do hope that the result of this paper goes beyond my own improvement in teaching to go beyond to improve the scholarship of teaching and learning in multicultural education. Below are the implications drawn from my effort to practice self-reflexivity.

First, doing self-reflexivity work is not one time project nor does it involve a linear progression. It is a non-coherent and non-consistent back and forth process that is exhausting and discouraging at times. Despite my continuous effort in becoming a critical self-reflexive multicultural educator, I often return to safer and less-conflictual ways of working with the white students in multicultural education classes. Critical discussion around reverse racism and going against the European American students’ beliefs, for instance, is at times more uncomfortable, risky and consequential than succumbing to the dominant discourse. Talking about self-reflexivity is comfortable and self-assuring but doing and practicing self-reflexivity is challenging and my practice in multicultural education is often contradicted by my intentions. My commitment in multicultural education is to work with the students to resist against unequal power relations, and yet, my complicity to the students’ dominant ways of thinking conceals the very thing I am committed to work against.

Second, through a close monitoring of practicing self-reflexivity as an educator of color, looking past the simplicity in generalizing educators of color as diversity experts becomes incumbent. The educators’, including the educators of color’s, perspective is not pure but *contaminated* (Ellingson, 1998) within complex sets of overlapping social structures constitutive of the system of domination and subordination firmly in place. Hence, I, an educator of color, can often enact violence, i.e., perpetuate the unequal power relations in my classrooms even if it is not intended and even if it is not for the benefit of me who is enacting it. Apologizing for non-

standard English to the students is not my intention and does not work toward my commitment and integrity as a multicultural educator. Moreover, what is quietly but surely enacted through my practices is the dominant symbol (i.e., Standard English) constitutive of the dominant linguistic system.

Third, doing self-reflexivity is relational practice and should not be viewed in a vacuum. For instance, the extent to which I can critique the notion of reversed racism with someone who share similar commitments is vastly different from the extent to which I can critique the same issue with the European American students in my own classrooms. The materiality and other forms of capitals entangled within power relations delimit the capacity in doing self-reflexivity. Even as I struggle to remain committed as a critical multicultural teacher educator, I cannot always ignore the consequences of how the students feel in the classrooms. In this regard, doing self-reflexivity reveals how the objective social conditions prevail in individual's daily practices (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu's (1996) argument that individuals' internal struggles are to an extent arbitrated by external sanctions affords us to think further about the kinds of conditions that would possibly enable the educator of color to be less obliged to give into political realities and better practice self-reflexivity. Moreover, such thinking inspires the opportunity to re-think about the current context of higher education in a different light and see the need to re-objectify the field of higher education.

Finally, when viewed from DuBois' (1903) concept of *double consciousness*, educator of color's doing self-reflexivity opens a possibility for shifting subject positions in which they are not just reacting as mere objects of power but act in their own terms. Du Bois argued that the members of oppressed group look at themselves through the gaze of the dominant and dominated and have low self-esteem. While this is true, the other side of my *two-ness* as an educator of color and as a member of historically oppressed racial group in which I bring the unique perspectives is what partially afford the constant struggles and dilemmas in doing self-reflexivity.

In her narrative of otherness in the academy, Threadgold (1996) raises a critical question: "How once discourses and genres of the other have been embodied, do you yet set about erasing the voices of the master, and learning to speak your own bodies, while still remaining credible within the academy?" (p. 281). Although I am not sure if this question can be answered in a yes or no fashion, experiencing struggles and dilemmas in one's pedagogical practices as a result of doing self-reflexivity and realizing that one is neither entirely an *insider* or *outsider* can lead to different ways of thinking about the very notion of self-reflexivity (Pillow, 2003). More

specifically, the tension between what I intend and know intellectually and the dominant other within myself provokes me to be reflexive about doing self-reflexivity in multicultural education classrooms and recognize that doing self-reflexivity is a constant negotiation of power and meaning constitutive of the various intersecting historical forces within the system of domination and subordination (Bourdieu, 1990a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Struggling to fight against my privileging of Standard English, for instance, attunes me more acutely to the dominant other within in and my own complicity to power as daily occurrences in my teaching. This compels me to continue working against the complicity that compromise my goal as a multicultural educator who is committed to resisting dominant discourses. In a sense, it feels more accurate to state that I am always in the process of working toward becoming a critical multicultural educator of color than I am a critical multicultural educator.

That said, the degree to which I succeed or fail in working with the European American students to assist them interrogate their dominant ways of thinking at least partially depends on the degree to which I wrestle and struggle with the tension between the doubly displaced myself within in, i.e., my complicity in and resistance against the system of oppression. Re-invoking the definition of empowerment offered by Shor and Freire (1987), mentioned earlier, in which they insist that empowerment should entail helping others to transform the society, to make empowering consequential difference in practicing self-reflexivity, the struggles and tensions between the dominant other and self simultaneously speaking through the myself should be regarded as inherent conditions of doing self-reflexivity. Even though "making positions transparent does not make them unproblematic" (Spivak, 1988a, p. 6), one of the central implications for educators of color here may be that engaging in struggles involved in practicing self-reflexivity in multicultural education can mean engaging in new possibilities not only for the self but also for the prospective teachers and their future diverse student populations. In other words, the struggles and tensions become a site for generative space in which I and students can grow.

A constant contesting and wrestling with the dominant ways of knowing that functions as an unarticulated yet hegemonic other within oneself is not a task required only of the educators in the dominant group but dominated group. As Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) noted, by abandoning individuals' dispositions to "their free play," we are allowing "determinism to operate to their full" (p. 136). If our goal in education is to have social effect so that we do not perpetuate the history that we are trying to change and if educators of color are to have a continuing significant

impact on the field, attending to the two-ness within educators of color seems requisite in the field of multicultural education.

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**Author Notes**

Jenna Min Shim  
The University of Wyoming  
1000 E. University Avenue  
McWhinnie, 209  
Laramie, Wyoming 82071  
[jshim@uwyo.edu](mailto:jshim@uwyo.edu)

Jenna Min Shim is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Wyoming. Her primary research interests center on curriculum theory and critical multicultural pedagogies with the specific goal of contributing to social change in favor of historically marginalized groups.



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