

CHAPTER 3

Pedagogy for the Professoriate: The Personal Meets the Political

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In 2005, after decades as an educator in many different settings, I came to reflect more deeply than ever before about the core values that inspire my teaching. This deeper exploration came about when I was invited to lead a seminar for untenured faculty organized by the University of Massachusetts Boston's (UMB's) Center for the Improvement of Teaching (CIT). This is a responsibility usually entrusted to wise and experienced teachers, and I was delighted to be chosen for this position. At the same time, I was challenged to discover whether I was up to the task and to discover what resources—personal and professional—I could draw on for this important work.

Structuring a semester-long weekly seminar for untenured faculty, of course, was no easy matter. My effort to unify a diverse and interdisciplinary group of faculty members and to foster collective reflection on their deepest questions and concerns about teaching led me to look more deeply into myself and my own history. I was prompted to examine my almost lifelong odyssey as a teacher, the politics of my pedagogical practice, and to discover what lessons I could draw from my own experiences to facilitate the seminar. The discussion that follows describes the long journey traveled before I became a senior faculty member and seminar leader for younger colleagues in their early years at the university. It will focus on the role of teacher and mentor and describe transformative engagement with pedagogy that the seminar fosters.

I was aware that if my younger colleagues were to share their teaching experience honestly and openly, I would need to lead the way—to reveal my own practice, inquiries, and uncertainties about my own pedagogy. Why is my practice the way it is? What were the most significant transformative moments in my classroom teaching? What impact would the seminar have on the future practice of my younger colleagues? What did I want to carry away from the seminar? I will begin with my own teaching odyssey, from the time when I first became a teacher.

First Beginnings

My teaching career began in a vertical classroom—the deep-blue tweed-carpeted steps of the modest brownstone house where I grew up in Brooklyn, New York (72 Midwood Street). Early on, my younger brother Barry and older cousin Kenneth always humored me by granting me my wish to play the role of teacher during our indoor playtime. I would promote them for correct answers to my many questions, moving them from the basement level of our house all the way up to the fourth floor. I had clear standards about what they needed to accomplish to move them up in my classroom.

My questions were quite easy at the start of our school game. I would begin by showing them my closed fists and asking them in which hand had I placed a pebble. Gradually, my questions became more difficult; most of them were about literature, because I was an avid reader and they were not. As a teacher, I asked questions that I would not myself always answer. The boys would affirm or contest my questions (and oftentimes my answers) and were ever ready to research the correct answers if I showed the least bit of pause. Despite our disagreements, though, I remember that I cared about the three of us as learners. Practicing an ethic of care with clear intentions has become the bedrock of my teaching ever since that time and served as the basis for my work in the CIT faculty seminar.

From the reading and the discussions during the meetings, I learned that teaching is not as simple as transferring knowledge. It involves “intellectual and spiritual growth” (a la b. hooks) that needs passion of teachers, attention to students, and close interaction between teachers and students. Guiding by what I learned in the seminar, I tried to pay more attention to each of the students in my class. I contacted the students who did not perform well in their assignments and/or exams, talked to them, tried to understand their problems, and encouraged them to try their best. I was very pleased to see how the attention and interaction between

students and me changed their attitudes and performance in the class. This experience lets me understand the power of caring and how caring can positively affect students’ learning. (seminar participant, assistant professor, management science & information systems)

Intentional Teaching and Caring

During my childhood days, teaching was a profession that was greatly respected by the black community in the 1960s and before here in the United States. Teachers were second to God in households like my own. Parents held their children’s teachers in high esteem no matter where families lived. They demanded quality materials and a rigorous curriculum. If the teacher raised any questions about my behavior or my work as a learner, my parents agreed (whatever the question might have been). Teachers were honored and respected by families and communities. I still remember the names and faces of each of my elementary school teachers, all of whom were white. In the fifth grade, when I was absent with an illness for more than two weeks, one of them even visited my home to bring homework and to give me a lesson or two. The actions of Mrs. Infante, my wonderful teacher, taught me a vital pedagogical strategy. When I became a public-school teacher, and later, when I managed to fit a similar practice into my life as a professor, I took to visiting colleagues’ classrooms at the higher education level.

The teachers whom I met were special people. My mother’s former teachers and classmates were all black. They frequently visited our home during the summer. These women were my idols, for they could spend days reading, going to plays, and talking about literature and ways that they could teach certain concepts in their future classrooms. They were fascinating for me to listen to, and I wanted so much to grow up and be like them because I admired them greatly. Conversations about school, class trips, homework review, and learning conditions were common in my home and in many of the homes of the families in my racially mixed, middle-class neighborhood of Flatbush. Teaching and school were constant topics for discussion at church, among friends, neighbors, and even with strangers (for my parents and other adult family members were proud to boast of their children’s scholastic prowess, academic success, and future professional goals).

Aunt Doris was a teacher of teacher aides for School District 17 in Brooklyn. I admired her for being a “grand” teacher, because she taught practitioners. I observed and studied her methods when I was in high school. She exuded warmth and understanding, and despite being a teacher of teachers, she made clear to me that she too was always a learner. “*Lifelong learners are the best teachers,*” she said. Her example would later inspire me when I

became a seminar leader and recognized that despite my rank as a senior faculty member, I had much to learn from pretenured colleagues, and that improving my own teaching would always be an ongoing project for me.

My early teachers in New York City taught me that the best education also links readily with real life outside the classroom. New York City became the resource room that we were taught to use. The City became our text for all sorts of learning. Some experiences were less than idyllic; nevertheless, we were taught to question and then to access all possible answers from a variety of people and sources. I recall taking a trip to the Bowery with Kenneth when we were teens to meet some folks who were not “like us.” We came to shake hands, to hear stories, to learn from the mostly men who lived on the streets of our City—this was a time before the term “homeless” was coined in our American lexicon. On a visit there, I was surprised when one of the men spontaneously and eloquently recited Langston Hughes’s poem, “Mother to Son” [“Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair...”], and he turned out to be someone who had personally known “Brother Langston.” That we discover our own humanity in the lives of others is a lesson that I learned early.

I have always been excited to be in a place called school, learning from teachers who—like my family—held high expectations for my academic success. I soared in classroom environments that felt like a network of learners woven together in a tapestry of curious minds—an extended family of caregivers for the intellect. I excelled in classes where independence, interdependence, and self-motivation were fostered. I tried to emulate teachers who helped me locate my voice, my uniqueness, and my academic strengths.

These early childhood memories and adolescent experiences shaped my teaching in a way that the CIT faculty seminar helped me to articulate. Since those early days as a “home” school teacher, I have taught in a variety of institutional contexts—in a large urban middle school in a neighborhood that included housing projects, on a main thoroughfare with brownstone houses on tree-lined side streets, and at a research university with an urban mission. I have taught in different parts of the world (from Boston, Massachusetts, to Hiroshima, Japan, to Villavicencio, Colombia). But the CIT seminar offered the first opportunity I ever had to draw on my experience to create a structure that other, more junior colleagues could use to think about, analyze, and question their core beliefs on teaching as well as their own epistemology, that is to say, how do we understand how we know what we know, and how can we help others to gain this self-awareness?

Mutual strength and inspiration come from a forum like the CIT seminar. Whether through my time as a student, as a PhD researcher... , or

on visits home to my family... , or when visiting my college and graduate school friends’ family homes around the United States, I know intuitively that I know most of what I know—because of my diverse experiences of sharing knowledge and reflection with diverse others. I have gained this in the... CIT seminar this past semester. I hope to turn these enlightened understandings of what I know into useful pedagogy as I continue to work at UMass Boston. (seminar participant, assistant professor, anthropology)

The Critical Importance of Relationships

I majored in English and teaching at the undergraduate and master’s degree levels of my postsecondary formal education. In those settings, I studied many principles of teaching and learning, such as methods to teach reading and analysis of literature. It was my first classroom teaching position in a real school setting that convinced me of a truth that was rooted in my early childhood teaching experience: “Relationships are at the core of teaching and learning.”

My first K-12 teaching experience was in a medium-sized city public school in Boston. As a young neophyte teacher, I was given some of the more challenging and “difficult” students to teach. I realized that I had to build trust with and among my students in order for them to trust me enough to learn from me and from each other. I had to form relationships with their parents as well, which lengthened my work time beyond the traditional school day. On occasion, I conducted home visits (thanks in large part to my memory of Mrs. Infante), held meetings at times that were conducive to working parents, and designed authentic learning activities so that students could become engaged in the classroom.

Ketley, an immigrant girl from Haiti, was a newly admitted student to my sixth-grade classroom in the middle of the autumn semester. She was part of the first wave of Haitians who migrated to Boston, so most of my students did not have Haitian American kids among their friends at that time. She entered the curriculum at a point when I had planned humanities lessons that tapped into each child’s race, class, and emergent adolescent identity. Each student in the class had to create a presentation about some aspect of their cultural background. Ketley decided to design an in-class presentation that concerned an aspect of *voodoo*—the reviving of dead chicken legs. I thought that such a presentation would be a unique opportunity to have Ketley’s voice and lived experience valued in a US school while she took English as a second language (ESL) classes in our pull-out ESL program (taught by a non-Haitian-speaking, well-meaning parent volunteer). As in

the preceding student presentations, I prepared the class to be respectful and to welcome what Bartolomé calls, “cultural border crossing.” Students anxiously waited for the day of Ketley’s presentation to arrive. We all wanted to see chicken legs walk!

Though Ketley’s experiment did not work—that is, the chicken legs did not walk, but stayed still—she passed an important test for gaining acceptance into the classroom. Even if she “failed” at the experiment, she showed the other students trust and was willing to take an academic risk to reach out to them. Her peers valued her willingness to teach them some of the secrets and processes of voodoo, even if she did not yet have the skill to do it. Under Ketley’s instruction, we thus shared a special experience together. I had 100 percent attendance and participation during this class period, and students were definitely tuned in and turned on to learning. They were attentive, engaged, and cooperative, and afterward, I felt that I had made an important step forward as a new teacher.

The encouragement I gave to Ketley increased students’ trust in me—they became more poised to engage as active participants in the learning process taking place in our classroom. They were also more willing to share aspects of their cultural heritage in a diverse classroom environment—what the education research community would later theorize as a sociocultural approach to teaching particularly meaningful to immigrant children and to children of color. New types of folks entering US classrooms on either side of the desk, especially immigrants from all over the world, at all levels from prekindergarten through the professoriate, need explicit gestures and expressions of welcome and of inclusion. Even for college professors, a welcome could not be taken for granted.

I am a foreigner to the U.S. and I have lived almost 15 years here. CIT has given me a home . . . at UMass Boston, a place to make a community. The modules on diversity and immigrant experiences in the classroom were instances within the community of CIT that gave me a chance to become more comfortable with [a] label that includes, and excludes all at once: immigrant. (seminar participant, assistant professor, anthropology)

The word “immigrant” is a powerful label. If a college professor in my seminar feels the sting of this imprint, imagine the inner feelings of Ketley in my sixth-grade class. I was so proud to have provided the welcome mat to Ketley by inviting her to participate in our class. Yet, the morning after Ketley’s presentation, I was reprimanded by my principal. She was very upset that I was practicing a nontraditional method of teaching English. She said that I excited the students about “voodoo,” that my class was too noisy with student talk, and there was not enough lecturing from me. I was stunned to

find out that the school did not value peer exchange and building authentic classroom relationships.

The message was clear, “Shut your door, manage the students, keep them quiet, and use didactic strategies!” Building relationships, a more participatory student engagement in class activities, and responsiveness to the cultures students brought with them were not a part of this equation. I was devastated. I had no one with whom I could discuss what was really happening with and to my teaching. Going to the principal was like announcing to the staff that I had problems in my classroom and could not control my learning environment. Many teachers had already complained that my room was quite noisy and disruptive to their teacher-centered practice. I had so many questions but could not trust anyone due to the discord of ideologies and teaching methodologies that created a gulf between my colleagues and me.

Unfortunately, my relationships with other teachers at this public school never jelled. They did not agree with my approach to teaching. So I shut my door, shushed my students, and in the privacy of my classroom quietly kept on using methods I knew would turn on learning. I began journaling in order to capture my observations, questions, and feelings. I needed a place to unload, a safe place to reflect and to discuss pedagogy without there being the threat of evaluation. In retrospect, I think that I needed a CIT seminar at the public middle-school level. Even then, I knew that good teaching gained much from collegial support for reflection and dialogue over means and ends.

I soon left the K-12 public-school system, armed with more questions about what makes good teaching and a thirst to join a teaching community where I could discuss them with others. Such a professional community based on trusting relationships was the faculty ingredient that I yearned to find at a school. Pancho Savery, a previous CIT seminar participant, noted that “a course only works when there is a shared sense of community that includes teacher and students.” My experiences told me that Pancho’s insight held much truth. My K-12 teaching experiences up to this point in my career demonstrated that I could not recognize and analyze the power (or the lack thereof) of my pedagogy without being a member of a professional community of teachers who were willing to share and give deep thought about practice. I was desperate to find a space to talk with peers about my experiences that I had captured in my journal.

Cross-Cultural Currents

I accepted a tenure-track faculty position at a small private college in the Greater Boston area, with high hopes that it would be different from the

K-12 arena. My hiring was one of several designed to bring diversity to this otherwise homogeneous, mostly white institution. My goals at the college-teaching level were, nonetheless, the same as they had been in my public middle-school classroom: to form relationships with and among students, to build a collaborative community of learners and teachers, to provide a safe place for each individual to establish membership in our shared humanity, and to elicit ways that facilitate authentic voice—all for the purpose of knowledge dissemination and knowledge creation. High-minded goals? Yes. Was my energy diverted? Yes. Could I go it alone? No.

I remember bursting into a colleague's office on one afternoon because I was deeply disturbed about my teaching that day. I had encountered a student who challenged my authority and knowledge concerning Japanese literary theory, in a course I was teaching on Japanese literature in translation. My dissertation research was conducted in Japan and involved the matter being discussed in my classroom, which was the purpose and place of literature in Japanese culture. The white female student was not of Japanese ethnicity, but her uncle had served in the US military in Japan after World War II, and she tried to contradict my observations by advancing a different and fairly stereotypical understanding of the issue. I handled this classroom disagreement in a clumsy way, became race conscious and defensive, and was utterly relieved when the class was finally over.

I went directly to a colleague from my department right after class, looking for help, needing someone who might redirect my energy—someone who might help me solve my problem. Instead, the colleague gave me a lecture about the type of “sheltered upper-middle-class white student” who attended that institution and how he (white male that he is) didn't try to teach about “foreign” places because he was well aware of the overall narrow life experiences of the students at that school. His message undermined my expectation of finding a place in the academy for talk about cross-cultural discord in the college classroom. But it didn't end my search for the right kind of support from colleagues.

Course evaluations suggested that most of my students were excited about learning in my class, but teaching at the college level continued to be a lonely journey. In faculty meetings, others appeared to be so self-assured about teaching content and confident in their teaching. But I was desperate to find the safe place to share with others my observations and experiences about cross-cultural interactions with students and instructional insights. I wanted to talk about the power dynamics in my classroom as a brown-skinned professor teaching all-white students of privilege. Having learned the “close your door and lecture lessons” from earlier teaching experience, I was skeptical about finding a place for such discussion. And of course, I

also wanted tenure. The politics of the school hierarchies, and the dangers of openness toward administrators or superiors who disapproved of my methods, outweighed my desire to enter into an honest dialogue about practice with folks whom I thought that I simply could not trust. I continued to write in my journal.

My pedagogical practice changed after I began to analyze my journal entries. Instead of starting my courses with research- and textbook-based knowledge, the first item on the agenda was sharing my personal experiences and ways of knowing the word and the world (Freire and Macedo 1987). My interest in multiple frames for knowing the world, reading the word, and making sense of the times in which we teach and learn stem from those early experiences growing up in New York City. I began to realize how much my approaches as an educator were shaped by my entire life, educational and professional experiences, and by my own ethnic identity, and this helped me be aware of the need to question and attempt to see through the lens of others. Whether riding the No. 3 train underground for 1½ hours from my home in Brooklyn to Harlem with Bach and Chopin in my arms en route to piano lessons or stopping for a good book at the library on 42nd Street, I was reared in an environment that caused me to constantly move in and out of cultures, depending upon the situation at the moment. I became confident and competent at this cross-cultural shifting while maintaining my core identity, recognizing that as a professor, I bring into my classroom my cultural lens, personality, individual ideology, and vision of the world. My lens shapes what I see but does not limit it, and I have always worked to support my students and colleagues in reaching this recognition for themselves.

Bleich (1995, 44) has identified a pedagogy of disclosure, defined as “sharing, confiding, and exchanging parts of [one's] inner and unapparent [life] with others,” and this approach came to shape much of my educational practice. After the Japanese literature fiasco, I decided to share with my students my hopes, my dreams, my fears, and my points of view concerning a variety of familial, local, state, national, and global issues concerning teaching, particularly the teaching of literacy in today's urban schools. For me, such practice sets the tone for building collaboration and community in the classroom and demystifies the role of instructor, which is especially crucial because for much of my career as a university professor I have taught future teachers for the K-12 classroom. I know my model will affect what my students will carry with them into their own classrooms and shape the educational experiences of another generation of learners. Teachers are mediators, and sometimes gatekeepers, where issues of culture arise in today's diverse classrooms; so, it is crucial as part of teacher preparation programs to have

them examine their own cultural lens and learn about “others” who might be different from themselves.

From Soliloquy to Dialogue

Capturing my thoughts about teaching in my journal slowly gave way to dialogue when I joined the faculty at UMB in 1995. Trusted colleagues who helped to recruit me to the Graduate College of Education talked about their pedagogical strengths and challenges at our then-small department meetings, over lunch, tea, or just in passing. The university’s urban mission contributed to such exchanges because it was clearly so important to be aware of the particular needs of our diverse student body—and because so many saw faculty diversity as an asset rather than a deficit. Diversity and the urban mission are what attracted me most to UMB, and among faculty and staff I am not alone. I was beginning to feel nourished at this university, a place where my long-standing values seemed congruent with the mission.

My teaching here is a combination of life experience and the opportunity to work among such varied student body immensely satisfying [which] often produces rich dialogue that can’t be replicated simply through colleges that have a student body that is privileged. What I really appreciate most about UMass Boston is how incredibly varied student experiences are. (assistant professor, counseling and school psychology)

My application to be part of a Center seminar during my fourth year of UMB teaching was followed by a welcome acceptance. It was exhilarating to be in a room with faculty from a broad range of discipline areas representing different colleges as well as life experience. Peter Nien-Chu Kiang, the seminar facilitator, did a marvelous job of having us form a community of peers, regardless of rank and/or full-time versus part-time status. He had us meet as a group for a few hours prior to the beginning of the semester-long seminar. We put faces with names, shared schedules, and began getting acquainted, so that our seminar focus on student evaluation could be launched at the onset of the semester.

As my seminar project, I conducted a small self-reflective, student-centered research study concerning my methods of student evaluation. Although I had designed a variety of learning assessment tools for students in this course, I had never before asked students how they viewed these instruments. The anonymous data collected over the course of the semester turned out to be invaluable to my teaching and to my future students’

learning and grades. Being able to collect, analyze, and interpret data from my students in my class and then be able to discuss these findings with a diverse group of scholars truly altered my teaching for the better. My colleagues helped me define the right questions to ask about my own teaching, so that I could learn to be more effective.

That semester’s seminar experience indicated to me that my earlier teaching experiences from middle school through two private colleges, one in Boston and one in Japan, were necessary components of my journey to find a safe place to engage in interdisciplinary conversations about the scholarship of pedagogy. Unfortunately, my journal writing stopped. However, connection to other people across campus had begun. At last, I felt safe and supported in the domain of teaching.

After this seminar, the CIT advisory board invited me to join—and a few years later, I was myself invited to facilitate a CIT seminar. Understanding how important it was for me to learn to trust myself as a teacher, to trust my students as active participants in the classroom, and finally, to trust my colleagues, I gladly accepted, affirming my earliest belief in the fundamental value of relationships in the teaching and learning transaction.

Preseminar Preparation

Poring over the individual applications to the seminar and searching for some way to unite the group in a relatively quick period of time during the first week was my first task. The mix of faculty represented many colleges and disciplines, in the liberal arts, business, education, and the sciences. Being a member of the Center advisory board had already involved me in recruiting faculty participants and actively discussing and choosing a group. Given the diverse representation of colleges and departments, at least one person on the board is sure to know at least one of the applicants, which will provide me with some insight into the individual. In addition to this knowledge, I read again and study each application, which includes requests that the applicant describe her or his teaching history, and to identify teaching and learning issues that most interest and/or challenge them.

My analysis of three sets of seminar applications indicates in response to the second prompt, as one might imagine, most people identify “safe contemporary issues” in teaching. On the other hand, some colleagues do identify specific challenges they face in their classrooms. Here are some examples of issues that seminar participants put on the agenda for our work together:

How can I create discussion environments that encourage students to think critically about hot-button issues (e.g., immigration, racism, class

inequality, etc.) and to come to terms with the beliefs and experiences that both connect and distinguish their world view from others?

In some ways, I am scared of and for our students—scared they are not learning, reading and writing; scared that they are bored and that they will not learn from my courses; but I am also scared for them. A graduate student who is having many difficulties at home and school came to my graduate class late. She appeared to be under the influence of some kind of drugs. When I spoke to her after class, she informed me she was taking two kinds of anti-anxiety drugs and vicodin.

I was approached by a student in an undergraduate course and asked if I had a “beef” with her. When I admitted I was frustrated by her disruptions in the classrooms—coming late, leaving early, not turning assignments in on time. She said, “You don’t know me and you are judging me!”

If time allows, I search out these colleagues and meet them on an individual basis to introduce myself, welcome them to the upcoming seminar, and find out if we need to talk about any burning issue prior to the seminar meeting. As was done in my own first seminar earlier, we all meet together as a group prior to the start of the semester for two or three hours for a general orientation to put names together with faces to get a general feel of one another, to establish agenda items for our syllabus, and to talk about what participation entails.

The Semester and the Seminar Begin

Leading a pretenured faculty seminar is much more than getting a course-load reduction to sit and chat with colleagues once a week (which alone would be a delightful professional development experience). It involves a commitment to inquiry, a deep level of comfort with silence among peers, and the confidence to decentralize the seminar to make it participant based and not facilitator focused. These, of course, are essentially the same challenges involved in all teaching efforts, wherever they occur.

As faculty, in the seminar, we are forced to acknowledge that our roles are complex, and there are multiple faces of our practice. There is the face that my students see—the expert on the subject matter, the visionary who can excite them about a new field, the person whom they have paid to impart knowledge and skills. There is the face that I see—the self-reflective/teacher-reflective one, with my thoughts about what I hope to achieve in class. Finally, there is the face that looks to my colleagues, and that they see in me. This is the face that helps me grow as a pedagogue. This is the space where the Center seminar has become a professional home for me on

my campus, a place I have searched to find for many years past. In order for this third face of one’s teaching to become manifest in a seminar, trust and respect must occur among faculty who come from different disciplines and life experiences. The exercise of what I have come to call the Cross-Cultural Teaching Odyssey serves this purpose quite well.

Everyone’s racial/cultural/socioeconomic/religious/gender-awareness odyssey is constantly being tapped as a resource by each of them as a source of personal power, a source of inspiration, and as such influences one’s personal way of knowing the world. This has implications for all facets of professional life, including work with students in and out of the classroom. All of one’s early learning and life experiences deeply impact one’s frame for seeing the world and the work of the classroom. Locating these early messages that are deep within one’s being has been essential to me in helping to identify self with others.

My plan for our weekly meetings envisioned colleagues from across the university sharing our odysseys with one another, practicing Bleich’s “pedagogy of disclosure,” defined as “sharing, confiding, and exchanging parts of [one’s] inner and unapparent [life] with others” (Bleich 1995, 44). We could tell our individual stories based on the following focus questions:

1. Who are you? Describe yourself. Where did you grow up? Who were your family members/friends? What impact did they have on you as a learner/future teacher/scholar?
2. Where did you attend school (K-higher education)? Who was a mentor/model teacher for you at any period of your education? What characteristics were outstanding to you? How are these characteristics manifested in your teaching today?
3. Whose scholarship/teaching most influenced you? Explain.
4. How have these experiences prepared you to teach at this institution? In your particular college/department? What are your successes? Where does service fit into your scholarship/teaching paradigm?
5. What teaching/scholarship/service challenges do you face today?
6. Other comments about your humanity, you as a cultural being.

Fatima is a Latina who confided that she had experienced a life-threatening illness shortly before the start of the semester. Her cross-cultural odyssey was lyrical, metaphorical, almost poetic, as she described her life adventures, struggles, and epiphanies to our rapt seminar. About four weeks into the seminar she was absent. It was an unexpected absence that caused a sharp pang in each of our hearts. At the onset of the meeting, a couple

of people asked if I had heard from Fatima. "Is she coming? Is she OK?" I replied that I did not know. Silence filled the room as we each looked at her empty seat. When any of us saw her the following days prior to the next seminar meeting, she received reassuring hugs and a welcome back to our pedagogical home space.

This cross-cultural protocol has helped to form caring, supportive, respectful relationships among seminar participants and has served as a catalyst for cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural/global exchange among and between seminar participants in a proactive fashion. It is incumbent on me to disclose first in order to model the process, taking my time and sharing honestly my responses and musings about my scholarship and teaching development. I have learned that it is critical for each person to take as much time as needed to present their self to the group (sometimes we need three full seminar sessions to complete this odyssey). Time is not a factor. The rich exchange is empowering and assists in cementing a close community early on in the seminar.

It was important that the members of the group got to know one another given the amount of sharing and open discussion which was to take place. During the opening session we went around the table and talked a little about ourselves, where we came from, people who were influential in our lives and a little about our pedagogy. The diversity of the group led to very interesting reflections and an appreciation for the fact that there was more than one way of looking at a situation. (assistant professor, sociology)

I plan to follow Denise's lead and to begin my class with the 'Cross-Cultural Teaching/Scholarship Odyssey' questionnaire, which all of the members of our CIT seminar completed and then discussed in class during our first meeting. I learned so much about my colleagues that first day and I was able throughout the semester to reflect on where each of us had come from, who our teachers were, and what we most valued from our educational experiences. It will be a fascinating exercise I think to see where the students in my class are coming from as they prepare to teach Shakespeare's poetry and plays. (assistant professor, English)

As the "chicken leg experiment" had served to bond Ketley, my middle-school students, and me when I was a public-school teacher long ago, the Cross-Cultural Teaching/Scholarship Odyssey becomes the first experience that securely joins the seminar faculty as a community of scholars focused on pedagogy.

After the completion of the odyssey exercise, we then return to the proposed draft syllabus for our work together and make any additional shifts or changes. Never has my syllabus been 100 percent on point after my first draft. I have always needed to revise it at least once more and resubmit for approval by the group because after the odyssey, we truly open up and think progressively about the work we want to cover over the course of the semester. These early sessions are the only times during the seminar that may feel like a class. After the odyssey (and sometimes during the odyssey sharing), the atmosphere is one of give and take.

Expert practitioners constantly battle against "knowingness" by questioning and raising perplexities. How this manifests itself in our different contexts is unique to each of us; so, early on in the seminar after the cross-cultural sharing, we distribute our syllabi and talk in detail about the type of teacher we think we are. Here Peter Filene's protocol (Filene 2005) has been very useful as a framework for presentation:

I bring to teaching a belief that _____
 In the classroom I see myself as _____
 I believe students are _____
 I seek to foster in students _____
 I think learning is _____

These two major exercises, the cross-cultural odyssey and the examination of syllabi, create an atmosphere of participation and collaboration, so that when issues arise, we have a shared framework, and knowledge of one another, to serve as a foundation for problem solving as well as problem posing.

In this, we always allowed interruptions in routine and gained much from them. These are the moments when crises and problems in our classes intervene and capture our collective attention. In a seminar meeting shortly after the group has completed the first two exercises, while we do our initial "check-in" with each other, a colleague is obviously upset about a classroom experience. She is a junior faculty member who grew up in a country in Asia and has had zero contact with black men. Her only exposure to black people prior to coming to UMB had been in her native country, through caricatures on television and news stories (which were mostly violence-filled/law-breaking images). She revealed that the source of her angst on this particular day was that she simply could not understand the "cool pose" posturing of two black men in her class who she felt challenged her authority on a regular basis. As we seminar participants help her unpack some of the hidden and taboo mind-sets in which we all operate with this particular student

population, I realized that such a breakthrough was not only a beneficial to her but to us all. Many US-born faculty, of all ethnicities, reveal their perplexities about teaching and learning transactions with this population as well. A large part of the CIT learning experience is to find a place to process the diversity issues that arise in our own classes and to examine our own assumptions about difference.

Encountering Pedagogy—the CIT Seminar

Dialogues in the seminar that I facilitated were rich in collective problem solving and reflection on the everyday challenges of university teaching, as in the following example from my seminar.

John: Last semester I had a true problem student, the worst I've ever had. I had a student from Russia who would continually make odd, off the mark, sometimes shocking statements in class. She had an inability to recognize inappropriate social cues in this society. The situation culminated when a guest presenter to my class discussed rape and the dynamics involved and this student blurted, "What about women who liked to be raped?" I was taken aback as was everyone in the class including the visitor. I sent her an e-mail to say that I was disturbed by what she said, but she refused to come in and talk to me. I also sought the advice of other faculty in my department and tried to get her to go to counseling.

Rachel: I'm happy to note that you stayed on the issue and didn't let her increasingly disturbing remarks silence the entire class.

Clara: Perhaps you can limit the number of questions she is allowed to ask in class.

John: I communicated my point to the woman, and it helped for a short while. Then she went back to the same behavior. I struggled with not losing my patience. Once I remarked, "Oh so and so, I don't want to hear more of your crazy theories." The class found my comment amusing, but I felt bad after saying this.

Morris: Yeah, it's so hard when you have well-prepared students who dominate the class too. That can be a problem.

Tiago: I have a practice to subvert the conversation and manage the flow away from the dominant student by simply asking, "Anyone else?"

Washington: You have to address the issue, however thorny, rather than backing off. I also share qualifiers with students like, "I'm still wrestling with this; society is wrestling with it too."

John thus was able to process this difficult and challenging classroom moment, gain support for engaging with the problem student, get suggestions for how to respond, and learn something valuable from sharing the experience with colleagues. This kind of scenario involving faculty conversation is a glimpse of the type of thoughtfulness and authentic sharing that goes on in a seminar. The CIT seminar has many levels of complexity, and it takes time to build the atmosphere of trust, and community, that makes this kind of conversation possible.

What may be the most important component of the seminar is precisely the weekly "check-in" time. These are the moments during the seminar when members bring hot-button issues about their classrooms into our inquiry-based thinking space. This is a crucial aspect of the seminar because oftentimes this is the only place where colleagues feel safe sharing classroom experiences that may not be going so well. The safety and confidential nature of the seminar allows for people to show vulnerability as teachers and to seek help without conditions. This, unfortunately, is a rare opportunity in the academic context for faculty, especially if they are junior.

Food and breaking bread together is important. Each seminar member signs up to prepare lunch or a snack for the group at least twice over the course of the semester. Serving ourselves buffet style, passing around the apple cider, or just standing in line waiting to get utensils allows the "down time" needed to transition from the pressures of the institutional universe to a quiet, trusting place where reflection and not action is the constant focus. One colleague stated in his final reflection,

The idea of having food on hand to munch while we discussed and shared took on an important role in the seminar. During the course of the semester the group got to sample some very interesting delicacies and old favorites brought in each week by a member of the group. Through it all it was another way in which the group was able to bond and to share.

Readings are always helpful as one of many tools to help highlight particular issues, strategies, and/or resources. Works by Peter Filene (1995), Estelle Disch (1999), and bell hooks (1994) have been especially insightful in provoking probing conversations. I have been careful to not overwhelm the syllabus with texts or readings as sometimes these become foils that block authentic conversation—which is exactly what I do not want to happen. Typically, I assign readings authored by those members of our community (tenured and pretenured; administrators and professional staff) whom I have invited to present during a portion of our weekly seminar time together.

Final Thoughts

In 2009, who I am as a teacher is a product of all of the places where I have taught from the steps at 72 Midwood Street in Brooklyn, New York, to rediscovering pedagogy with peers at an institution of higher education in Boston. I have learned that teaching is not simply the transference of knowledge but so much more. The cultural context and conditions for exchange are critical variables. How can my Asian colleague teach brown-skinned men if she fears them at an unconscious level? How can Kerley learn from me if she thinks that I see her as an empty silo with nothing to offer in the classroom, especially if she cannot speak English well? How can I teach a white female the lessons that my Japanese oba-san taught me if we don't share the same level of respect for all cultures from an indigenous point of view?

Almost two-thirds of my teaching career has involved searching for the safe space to talk with peers about my work, the faces of my classroom, and the dimensions of my questions. It is fortunate to be at a university that supports the investigation of inclusive pedagogy. Colleges and universities everywhere should shoulder such financial support for faculty to reflect about pedagogical practice, especially for faculty working toward tenure. There was no doubt about the university's interest and its urban mission being at the core of all the seminar discussions. This meant knowing that we were always willing to think, and think again and again, about how we could best teach and meet the needs of a vast diversity of learners. This benefits the institution, the faculty, the community, and most importantly the students, especially because our students learn more effectively and authentically. The Center seminar has been a win-win situation for all.

A major current challenge is to transfer this collaborative process that I have learned and refined in my work in the Center seminars into the K-12 educational structure outside our university, through my work teaching schoolteachers. Hopefully, they will find its lessons useful and be supported in using them, as I myself was not when I was a school teacher. Another arena for using the model is in my current work with teacher-training faculty at universities in other countries of the world, such as Colombia and Japan, two countries where I have long been consulting and teaching. My sense is that our discoveries about the power of collaboration have wider applicability outside North America. It is a privilege to continue to evolve professionally and be part of a process of ongoing faculty renewal that collaborative, critical reflection brings to colleagues who are committed to working together to improve their practice.

PART II

Faculty Identity as a Resource for Effective Teaching