Research Article

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Knowledge, authority, and positionality in Asian immigrant female faculty teaching diversity classes

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Abstract: This paper is a self-reflective narrative of our teaching experience as two immigrant Asian female professors who teach Multicultural Education. Employing collaborative autoethnography (CAE), the study addresses the issues of authority, positionality, and legitimacy of knowledge claims in critical feminist pedagogy. Two research questions guided our inquiry: 1. How does a teacher's racial positionality play out in exercising professional knowledge, and conversely, 2. How does seemingly neutral professional knowledge become racialized in the discussions of race? Major findings demonstrate the double-edged contradictions in the body/knowledge nexus manifested in our everyday teaching contexts. On the one hand, the bodily dimension of teacher knowledge is de-racialized because of institutional norms and cultures. On the other hand, there are times professional knowledge becomes racialized through the teacher's body. Understanding the body/knowledge nexus that invites precarious power dynamics in racial discussions and even blatantly dismisses our professional knowledge, we, as an immigrant faculty of color, find it impossible to create a safe environment for participatory, critical discourse. Acknowledging our triple marginality, we put forth the concept of "pedagogy of fear" (Leonardo, Z., & Porter, R. K. (2010). Pedagogy of fear: Toward a Fanonian theory of 'safety' in race dialogue. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 13(2), 139–157) which squarely disrupts the idea of a safe environment in race dialog and urges teachers to confront their own/their students' fear and create a space of teaching vulnerably.

Keywords: teacher authority, teacher identity, politics of knowledge, critical pedagogy, race discussion

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The pedagogical journey narrated in this paper started with our fascination with and commitment to Freire's critical pedagogy. As young, emerging scholars in higher education, we wanted to build our classroom as a site for transformation where students gain critical awareness and feel empowered to challenge racial injustice in society. One pedagogical pillar of critical pedagogy, as we conceived, was to utilize experiential knowledge of students as a way to delegitimize the dominant body of official knowledge (Apple, 2014) that is inherently oppressive and disengaging. By advocating students' authentic voice and agency, critical pedagogy proposes a radical way of teaching – contradictory to the traditional mode of instruction based on the professor's expert knowledge and instructional authority. When we introduced social justice topics in teacher education programs (multicultural education) and other graduate classes addressing social inequity at a predominantly White institution (PWI), we set the tone in the beginning of each semester that we value and welcome everyone's experiences, opinions, and perceptions as a valid intellectual quest.

Despite our optimism, we soon found ourselves struggling with many unexpected challenges in our classes. The first author, [Name 1], teaching a multicultural education class experienced explicit resistance from students while leading discussions on the issues of racial inequity in society. She experienced countless moments of self-doubt and confusion about her role as an instructor and how to position herself in relation to students who bluntly dismissed her authority. The second author, [Name 2], also faced students protesting "you know nothing about us" and accusing her of being "judgmental and unsympathetic" about their needs. We gradually learned that we were not just a faculty of color, but were Asian immigrant professors; our encounter with our students and our students' encounter with us were complicated with many factors beyond our (and possibly our students') own perceptions and control. This paper is a self-reflective narrative of our teaching experience as a transnational, immigrant Asian female teacher who employed critical pedagogy for Multicultural Education in a predominantly White institution. The narratives focus on our unique – triple-marginalized – position and subjectivities as an immigrant Asian female professor.

As immigrant female faculty of color, our skin color, accent, and cultural mannerism immediately disclose our immigration status, and these subjectivities are complicated by the authority position as an instructor. That is, our demographic profile is at odds with our professional position bestowed by the institutions of higher education. Our body manifests our social subjectivities which are constantly gazed and scrutinized by our students in the classroom. This paper provides an account of how the teacher's body is intersected with traditional ideas of authority and professional knowledge, as well as what happens when personal experiences are actively incorporated as course materials. In particular, we want to probe the

following two questions in this paper: 1. How does a teacher's racial positionality play out in exercising professional knowledge, and conversely, 2. How does seemingly neutral professional knowledge become racialized in discussions of race?

1 Collaborative autoethnography as inquiry method

Using our own teaching episodes and related self-reflection as the main sources of data this study naturally falls under the tradition of autoethnography in terms of its research design. The study, in particular, is collaborative autoethnography (CAE), a relatively new mode of inquiry located at the intersection of ethnography and autobiography, and carried out by a team of researchers. Our engagement in collaborative autoethnography (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2012) was an unintended, yet natural and somewhat inevitable process stemmed from our long-term friendship and intellectual correspondence over the past 15 years. Both authors landed on their first faculty position in 2012 in a predominantly White institution. [Name 1] stated to teach multicultural education class where discussing racial inequity was an inevitable part of her teaching curriculum. [Name 2], started teaching graduate research classes, issues of diversity and equity was an integral part of course materials, discussion, and assignments. Facing students' blatant resistance and experiencing the moments of rupture in our classes – our instructional authority was questioned, dismissed while delivering critical literature. We agonized over the uncomfortable situations, painfully analyzed them with each other's support, and made sense of who we are and how our position as transnational immigrant professor complicated the intricate dynamics of knowledge claim in our own classrooms. Without labeling it, we have engaged in a fifteen year-long collaborative ethnography as defined by Chang and others (Chang et al., 2012).

CAE is a collaborative and dialogical inquiry in which two or more co-researchers draw their autobiographical narratives on the topic of mutual interest, supporting each other's biographical story-telling and critical self-reflection, and analyze and interpret the data within the shared sociocultural contexts (Hernandez, Ngunjiri, & Chang, 2015). As a result, the end product of CAE is multivocal—presenting more than an individual's account of his/her life experiences; the shared sociocultural dimensions of participating researchers also naturally surface as a powerful common thread while each individual's authentic life stories remain intact. Through the act of writing CAE, we were able to explore and interpolate deeper and more critical interpretations into our experiences, which helped to elicit some useful, though temporary and incomplete – insights and

conclusions of our own. We acknowledge that our stories and reflections have been primarily motivated by our desire to improve our relationships with students and facilitate students' intellectual growth in class, especially their critical self-consciousness and sense of agency. As a result, this collaborative work presents a significant pedagogical implication for ourselves as well as those who may find themselves engage in intricate political and cultural dynamics with their students (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) in their effort to materialize the idea of "critical pedagogy" in college classroom.

2 In search of our pedagogy

What critical pedagogy challenge is not only the unjust social structure, but epistemological assumptions of traditional pedagogy. These epistemological revolutions are shared and taken up more seriously by feminist teachers who foreground positionality and authority issues of women faculty. Frances Maher's pedagogy of positionality (1999), for example, advanced a pedagogical theory to highlight positionality as a way of knowing. However, practicing feminist critical pedagogy has been proven as a risky choice. Some students are overly expressive and argumentative; others are highly vulnerable and easy to be offended. While everyone's firsthand racial experience is welcomed, it is sometimes pitted against the teacher's professional knowledge on racial inequality. Given that not all personal experiences are equally valid for knowledge claims, whose body(race) contributes more to meaning-making than others? What is the role of a teacher's professional knowledge in negotiating meanings?

In fact, feminist pedagogy discusses sympathetically the authority issue of women of color. Multicultural education is a sensitive topic, because it directly challenges White students' taken-for-granted privileges and comfortable assumptions. Scholarly literature (Jakubowski, 2001; Kadowaki & Subramaniam, 2014; Moore, Acosta, Perry, & Edwards, 2010; Pittman, 2010; Reynolds, 2011) shows the topic of race in college classroom becomes a huge plight and challenge for faculty. Student resistance, especially White students', in multicultural classes has been well documented in literature along with the burden of emotional labor required of faculty teaching the class, especially female and faculty of color (Kadowaki & Subramaniam, 2014; Moore et al., 2010; Vargas, 2002). African American faculty members teaching multicultural education classes have experienced more of student resistance, especially from White students (McGowan, 2000). Women faculty (of color) are often viewed as lacking authority, as the politics of racial/gender relationships between the majority of students and the instructor came into play (Kishimoto & Mwangi, 2009; Pittman 2010; Vargas,

2002). Pittman (2010) documented women faculty of color's experiences of White male students, describing how White male students devalue and invalidate the scholarship of race and gender, and that devaluation is augmented when the content is delivered by women of color.

As immigrants, our challenges are somewhat unique. We are at a marginalized position in terms of gender, race, and immigration status. This is what Hernandez et al. (2015) call "triple marginality." Our position is more vulnerable than U.S.-born faculty of color in establishing traditional authority. Our experience as immigrant faculty is also markedly different from U.S.-born Asian women who speak English as their first language (see also Mayuzumi, 2008). Our foreign accent is a primary source of discrimination and lack of respect. We routinely encounter students who pretend not to understand our English, blame the foreign accent for their lack of progress, and exchange their ridicules and disrespect when an additional clarification or reiteration is requested. It is not only students who exercise prejudices against our foreign accent, but the institution (i.e., administrators) that question the credibility of our qualification because of our foreign accent. When the second author, [Name 2], took her second faculty position after four years of successful teaching at another university, she was subjected to the English proficiency evaluation set by the university. Such discrimination institutionalized in a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) creates an environment where stigma and prejudice against immigrant, non-native speaking faculty is perpetuated (Bang, 2016; Bazemore, Janda, Derlega, & Paulson, 2010; Chen, 2014; Lee & Janda, 2006).

Given this unique strand of our experience as immigrants, it is best to conceptualize our story within the transnational feminist framework (Mayuzumi, 2008). As Mayuzumi (2008) argues, the existing feminist conceptualizations fail to capture the plight of immigrant faculty who experience daily struggles due to accented English. Drawing upon the transnational feminist framework as a conceptual platform of our experiences, we analyzed the dynamics over racial issues in our classrooms. As such, our positionality and subjectivity will be disclosed and interrogated by our reflective gaze. Using our critical and collaborative autoethnographic narratives (Chang et al., 2012; Marx, Pennington, & Chang, 2017), this paper aims to complicate the practice of critical feminist pedagogy by interrogating the body/power/knowledge nexus.

3 Teacher's race and authority in the classroom

Through our teaching experiences, we discovered that there are times when the two dimensions of knowledge claims – bodily/experiential and bodiless/abstract

dimensions – coincide or conflict with one another. The bodily dimension of knowledge (e.g., teacher or student experiences) is constantly vying with official knowledge (e.g., textbook knowledge) over the process of meaning-makings. The following cases illustrate where knowledge is constructed from personal experiences as well as cases where such credibility is questioned through the same body.

4 Body, constructive to knowledge

Personal experience becomes a vital part of knowledge claims. In race dialog, everyone's racial experience has strong potential to understand racism. As immigrant women speaking English as foreign language, we disclose our hurtful experiences, e.g., when we were new graduate students, our classmates teased us for our English pronunciation, pretended not to understand what we said, or avoided working with us in class. Upon sharing some students approached us at the end of class commenting how they sympathized with our experience. It seems that our personal experience as an immigrant stimulates lively discussion of racism and discrimination, although it is hard to know whether students understand the concept of racism embedded in those stories or just stop at sympathizing with our stories of hardship. Both of us often shared in our classroom a story of South Korea's oppressive schooling practices (e.g., extremely competitive exams). We shared our arduous schooling experience where we stayed at school from 7:30 a.m. until 11p.m, with only 20 min for lunch and dinner breaks. The students were immediately engaged, as indicated by a barrage of questions: "How did you handle such high pressure from the national exam?", "Do you think the Korean education system is better than ours (American system) here?" As such, the teacher's first-hand experience was not only validated but also privileged in a multicultural education class.

This privileged position in knowledge claim is possible when the body of the teacher is accepted by students as an authentic and trustworthy source of knowledge. [Name 2] purposefully used the issues of math tracking when explaining structural inequity in American schools. Having taught mathematics in three countries including South Korea and Singapore – known to have top-performing math students – and teaching an introductory statistics class, her students rarely raised a question or counterpoint to her critique on math tracking practices in schools. Rather, her sharing of issues in math education elicited a high level of student acceptance and engagement.

It is not only minority teachers' but also minority students' personal experience that generate the validity of knowledge claims. In race discussions, both of us value the presence of African American students, because their views,

experiences, and feelings about racism significantly contribute to advancing race discussion. When an African American student conflicted with a White student, we often noticed that African American students' voices won legitimacy in racial discussions. For example, one day [Name 1]'s class was discussing Driving While Black, a White student commented that "African Americans are oversensitive. African American people can speed. Why do they interpret everything as a racial issue?" One of the African American students responded by explaining practices of racial profiling and its prevalence among African American communities. Silence ensued. His comments appeared to have an educating effect on White students who had never related such experience to race. Although it is not entirely certain whether the White student was convinced or merely silenced, it appeared that the African American student's view won respect in that particular situation.

Such African American students' role is consistent with what critical race theorists such as Delgado and Stefancic (2001) call "testimonies" and "counter-story telling." However, not all personal experiences are validated or welcomed in the classroom. We have encountered White colleagues and students who perceived their firsthand experiences have no value in race discussion. In a down-to-earth conversation with a close colleague, [Name 1] found from her conversation with a white colleague that a white instructor often expressed frustrations at her own perceived lack of racial experience. Her own skin color, as she perceives, emerged as a hindrance in leading a productive discussion. The white colleague often self-doubts, "Who am I to speak about race issues? I haven't been in that position." Her anxiety was shared with white students who also expressed their anxiety about taking this class, and anxiety about speaking out in class. In [Name 2]'s class, a White male student wanted to conduct a small research project on African American students in his school. Despite his very successful teaching experience with African American students over the past 10 years and sincere commitment to the topic, he expressed extremely high anxiety repeatedly asking, "is it OK for me to do this project?" Throughout the semester, he constantly asked for validation of his work from [Name 2] and other African American students in class. This begs an important question: In what context is a person's personal experience not validated? Why?

The tension between different knowledge claims is not limited to groups of students; it also emerges between students' lived experiences and "official knowledge." Sometimes, even African American students are silenced or discredited by textbook representation of racism. When [Name 1]'s class was discussing racism in sports, an African American student athlete who became conspicuously present at that moment remained silent because he did not agree with the existence of racism in sports. Only when he was asked to comment did he mutter, "I play a sport [the name of sport withheld] and wanted to make it to pro,

because I wanted to make my mom happy.” Clearly, he had a hard time understanding why pursuing sports—the very dream of his beloved mother - was said to be related to racism. As Ellsworth’s (1989) seminal article addresses, the mismatch between personal experience and academic representations can alienate and even disempower African American students so that some would rather claim “I know better than the author because I lived through that”, the student opted to retreat from the academic discourse.

The disengagement of African American students from the academic discourse exemplifies what Scheurich and Young (1997) call “epistemological racism.” Epistemological racism tackles the issues of who speaks to whom, and who is the subject and object of hegemonic academic discourse. This level of racism allows us to see that scholarly language intimidates people who have not participated in knowledge construction (e.g., racial minority groups), and oppresses previously marginalized people. Bell hooks 1994 poignantly argues that the language used in scholarly literature is often so convoluted and pedantic that it only alienates those historically marginalized groups for which it claims to speak. The African American student-athlete in [Name 1]’s class was not able to comment on racism in sports because he was unable to verbalize his experience in alignment with the academic discourse. His positional knowledge became muted and invisible in the classroom over academic discourse. It is such an irony that what is written for marginalized groups ends up marginalizing the very group.

5 Body, obstructive to knowledge

While the previous section discussed how personal knowledge becomes legitimate in classroom discussion, the use of personal experience needs to be critically re-evaluated. As Freidman and Rosenberg (2007) assert that without an analytical framework, students will produce unexamined understandings solely based on their personal experiences. University professors are expected to deliver textbook knowledge, theories, and scholarly discourse instead of just personal knowledge. As Eastman (2006) stated, a teacher’s physical body is mediated by the institutional body, which participates in rituals of regimentation, regulation, domination, and discipline (p. 300). The higher education institution expects the teacher to perform a neutral subject, as is evidenced in students’ accusation of professors being biased. Students often associate nonpartisan, objective, value-free knowledge as “professional.” Disclosing teacher’s body, therefore, involves a risk in credibility. Knowing our knowledge claim is inevitably enmeshed with our presenting body, how can we deal with the convoluted effect of our own body in discussing a controversial race discussion?

Our experience confirmed that Asian immigrant faculty's experiences of racism are often discredited and discounted. Both of us saw students' scornful reactions to our discrimination experience: "[if you want to complain about racism you are experiencing], why did you come to the United States since your country would have treated you better?" We found it puzzling because African American students' stories of discrimination shared in class seemed to be well accepted by the whole class and even had a good educating effect. In contrast, our discrimination stories are often sneered or rebuked. Asian immigrants, though their immigration history now extends close to 200 years (Takaki, 1998), have been portrayed as "forever foreigners" who cannot be an integral part of American society (Tuan, 1998). As a result, students tend to view the stories of Asian immigrant teachers as the stories of "forever foreigners" and became unsympathetic listeners. Why do the same students who were fascinated with our other stories turn to taunting our testimony of being discriminated?

When student experiences are directly contradictory to the textbook knowledge, we often attempted to deliver textbook knowledge as a messenger of academic products. This was a very appealing strategy to us considering our fragile status as authority. A similar strategy has been documented in Stanovksy's (1997) discussion of how men teach feminism by shifting the dialog between a teacher and his students to a "dialog opened between the authors read in a class and the participants in that class" (p. 13). During our formative years as junior faculty, we did resort to this strategy to avoid the complication of our body. When [Name 1] discussed the domestic racism issue, she learned to minimize her voice as an "outsider's", and made constant references to the textbook. In one of her classes, one student argued against the existence of racism reasoning that "African American NBA players earn a million dollars" and "There are African American doctors and lawyers." [Name 1] pointed out the textbook statistics of the earning breakdown by race. When a theory and textbook knowledge is provided to juxtapose students' personal experiences with larger societal contexts, their resistance generally subsided, although they might have not been completely persuaded.

However, there are situations where textbook knowledge does not present itself as authority. Some students are able to discern and dismiss academic discourse, even resent the author's (textbook's) renditions. Once [Name 1]'s class was discussing Bell hooks 1994 trenchant critique on sports. hooks argues that the cultural system operates to the disadvantage of poor African American youths who are pushed into the sports world. An African American girl in the class raised her hand, commenting, "Why is it oppression? Why are we pushed? African American guys choose to pursue sports because it is more lucrative than other [careers] or because they enjoy it. The system takes advantage of us, and we take advantage of

the system, too.” Upon her comment, another student supported her, saying that “Nowadays African Americans have an equal chance to succeed. There are many athletic scholarships open.” Her assertion immediately elicited vocal consensus with chanting among students. [Name 1] wondered, would it be interpreted as a protest against the given textbook knowledge or a gesture to undermine the teacher’s authority?

Our strategy to utilize the textbook as authority indeed reduced explicit vocal resistance to some extent. However, as asserted by Freedman and Holmes (2003), our bodies (teacher’s body) were constantly read into even when we presented textbook knowledge. One day, [Name 1]’s class discussed class stratifications within American social structure. When she was merely rephrasing the main thesis of class reproduction as explained in the textbook, one student raised her hand and commented, “America is a much more advanced society than your country South Korea. In America, we can achieve if we set our mind.” [Name 1] realized that because of her immigrant position, students speculated on her motivations for reiterating certain information in class. Therefore, it was clear that student resistance was not only toward the critical points presented in the textbook, but toward the presenting body—an outsider—whom they found lacking ingenuity and credibility.

Acknowledging our immigrant body is constantly obstructive to knowledge claim in race dialog, we learned to strategically reposition ourselves in order to achieve our pedagogical goal. Perves and Stephenson (2009) illustrate how the teacher’s role is constantly shifting and the teacher’s identity is shifted with the negotiated role. It is not an essentialized, fixed, stable self that is expressed in class. Poststructural theories of identity allowed us to reposition our teacher-position when facing a pedagogical dilemma.

In [Name 2]’s graduate class, African American teachers and school administrators vehemently disagreed when she explained Ogbu’s theory of voluntary and involuntary minority to explain African American students’ difficult relationships with schools (e.g., refusal of meritocracy and school-related values). “We do value education as much as others do, maybe more than everybody else,” is a comment frequently provided by her African American students. This protest may come from the fact that their own ethnic group was portrayed in comparison with the Asian professor who Ogbu categorizes a voluntary minority group. In the situation where the professor was an Asian often portrayed as a “good immigrant”, student resistance can be viewed as protest against the professor’s separation of you-involuntary minority vs. me-voluntary minority. She learned to reposition her ethnic body as an example of an involuntary minority citing Koreans in Japan who were drafted for forced labor before World War II. Koreans in Japan during the colonial era held similar status as African Americans in American society; the social stigma and prejudices against those Korean immigrants as well as their

descendants living in Japan still persist. In doing so, she put her racial body, Korean, in the same position as that of her African American students. Instead of highlighting her Asian American identity in America – a voluntary minority at large, she repositions her racial body as an involuntary minority group member in the Japanese colonial context to deal with student resistance.

When an African American student in [Name 1]’s class expressed discomfort on the idea of sports as an oppressive system, he became upset because, for him, sports was a ticket to get out of his immediate surrounding, thus sports was empowering not oppressive. His rage may be aggravated all the more when he learned this from someone not his people. [Name 1] tried to relate to the student by positioning herself as someone in a parallel position: the oppressed are made unconscious of such oppressive system. She brought a concept of marriage as an oppressive form of male domination. She also explained how a seemingly complementary concept of Asian as model minority can serve as an oppressive discourse to many Asian students. In these conceptualizations, the instructor’s position shifted from non-African American outsider to a member of the oppressed. Our strategy of repositioning our body in race discussion is closely aligned to Jupp and Espinosa-Dulanto’s argument (2017) that instructors need to “tease out, elaborate on and recognize” (p. 25) their positionality in order to facilitate more reflective and complex discussion on race and social justice.

When white students rebel against the notion of white privilege, both of us repositioned ourselves in a privileged position in our homeland. We had never considered ourselves as minority or underprivileged until we landed on U.S. soil. Our minority identity was newly acquired and had a relatively short history. In the ethnically homogeneous society like South Korea, one’s socioeconomic status and education largely determined one’s privileged position. We had been in the dominant group. Therefore, we shared with white students that we had once thought that we had earned all good things based on our merit and effort when in fact many of them had been simply given to us based on our privileged status in our homeland. We also shared how our beliefs were completely shattered when we became a member of racial minority subject to social prejudices and discrimination. Acknowledging the dubious impact of our body on a knowledge claim in race discussion, we have learned to vigilantly seek and intentionally exploit a point of connection with students in order to achieve our teaching goals.

6 Discussion: Pedagogy of fear

The preceding episodes illustrate double-edged contradictions in the body/knowledge nexus. First, the bodily dimension of teacher knowledge is de-

racialized because of institutional norms and cultures; however, there are times knowledge – either personal and professional – becomes racialized through the teacher's body. In other words, the body sometimes serves as a source of authority; sometimes a teacher's racial embodiment becomes an explicit obstacle in drawing the legitimacy of knowledge claimed (recall students' refusal to acknowledge social inequality in America; student accusation of an immigrant scholar's discrimination experience as being biased). The two strands of positions that a teacher occupies – demographic and professional position – are situationally defined, ambivalent, and inconsistent.

When the question becomes, how our professional knowledge is exactly used in fighting social injustice, however, we reach a perplexing conclusion: Our professional authority does not come into play in race dialog, when students encounter cognitive dissonance. Our stories such as homeland schooling experience are comfortable listening to because the stories reinforce their belief that America is a better place to live. However, such stories did not serve to help students step out of their comfort zone. Students welcome our authority only when it does not uproot their deep-seated beliefs, and our story only reinforces their existing frames of reference. Our homeland experiences shared in classroom are simply not relevant in race dialog. Further, our accented English and homeland experience, which would otherwise have been rich resources in discussions of global equality, makes no contribution to our pedagogical goal of raising critical consciousness and altering the U.S. racist social structure.

The preceding episodes compelled us to believe that our minority position (especially immigrant position) undeniably trumps our professional authority in race dialog. We then have grappled with a pedagogical solution. While feminist pedagogy emphasizes the use of personal experiences and authority-sharing, what if the instructor does not possess the authority to enact a racial discussion in the first place? What if sharing personal experience is not conducive to knowledge construction (in my case, it only reinforces status quo)? Can we strip ourselves of our skin color, ethnic background, and immigration status? Can we still teach a course about racism? We find our hope in "pedagogy of fear" (Leonardo & Porter, 2010) to confront our fear.

Leonardo and Porter (2010) put forth the concept, pedagogy of fear, and squarely disrupts the notion of safe environment in race dialog, and urges teachers to confront each other's fear. In this pedagogy, we have to lay each other's fear bare. Kishimoto and Mwangi (2009) call this practice, "teaching vulnerably", stating that a teacher and learners have to go through moments of vulnerabilities in order to truly learn about racism. In order to accomplish our pedagogical goal of raising critical consciousness, it is necessary for teachers to encourage conflict, discomfort, cognitive dissonance, and resistance, through which learning occurs

(Jakubowski, 2001; Pasque, Chesler, Charbeneau, & Carlson, 2013). This goes against the grain in the university where professors are held responsible for creating a safe environment. We feel that it is our responsibility to inform the students of the fact that race dialogue is inherently unsafe, involving hurt and pain, because otherwise “safety discourses on race are a veiled form of violence” (Leonardo & Porter, 2010, p. 140), benefitting colorblind white individuals.

Our reality as an immigrant faculty of color is impossible to create a safe environment, when our professional knowledge based on the textbook is blatantly dismissed. In other words, our immigrant position automatically places us candidates for an unsafe environment. It is this very space where we can practice pedagogy of fear. When students protest the idea of meritocracy as ideology, we can focus on their fear, the fear that their belief is shattered. We had to interrogate the students, “Who believes in meritocracy? What class, what race, believes in meritocracy?” Also, it is helpful for us to share our journey of how our belief in meritocracy became disillusioned. In this way, we can shift our focus away from the politics of identity, to focus on what each student actually is learning. We would like to conclude this essay by introducing one successful classroom practice by Ford (2012). Through the analysis of white students’ reflection papers, Ford (2012) found out that white students experience “script changes” in their attitude and behavior, and achieve transformational critical consciousness. These learnings occur through shame, guilt, and cognitive dissonance among white students.

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