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ABSTRACT

Title of document:	SHIFTING ATTENTION: A FEMINIST HUMANITIES MODEL FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION
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I introduce a Feminist-Humanities model for social justice education that demonstrates pedagogical potency to build students' capacity for transformative social change. I present the model, describe its theoretical framework, assess its impact on student learning, and consider what findings can offer to social justice educators at this critical historic moment.

The Feminist-Humanities model is an epistemic project at the intersection of feminist theory, feminist pedagogy, and the humanities ways of knowing. To move beyond consciousness-raising and prepare students to act, it teaches tools of analysis—knowledge, identity, intersectionality, power, structure, and affect—that connect individuals to the larger social landscape so students develop more accurate knowledge about themselves, others, and the social world. My findings suggest these tools shift students' attention (Fisher, 2001) in ways that build their capacity for change.

I taught the model in a one-semester general education diversity course with twenty-four student-participants. I used feminist narrative analysis to analyze four data sources: each student's first and final papers, transcripts of an end-of-semester focus group, and my teacher/researcher journal. I identified three shifts in attention related to the model's curricular goals. In shift one, students take up the epistemic project and enter

a mode of active critical reflection (Fricker, 2007) to interrogate their knowledge and assumptions. In shift two, students use their new knowledge to connect the individual and the social through analyses of structure and power to recognize why people with different social identities view and experience the world differently (Gordon, 1997). And in shift three, students engage an affective analysis (Ahmed, 2004b; Gordon, 1997) that connects the head and the heart in a thrust of empathetic understanding that demands action.

My analysis suggests these shifts are key to the success of the Feminist-Humanities model because they surprise students, help them look more closely at what they think they know well, and invoke their imaginations to consider what the world could be with their effort (Ahmed, 2004b). Particularly potent is the model's use of affective analysis, which critically examines the ways emotions inform our social interactions to reveal the lived impacts of social structures and their relations of power. Findings indicate affective analysis may be the bridge between consciousness-raising and action because it allows students to consider what emotions can tell us about how our society operates and what we could do differently.

Findings demonstrate that social identities deeply inform the learning process, and further investigation of the complex ways students experience a social justice course could lead to more effective curricula. At this historic moment when educators are asking how best to teach the skills and tools of change, this dissertation contributes new techniques for institutions of higher education for educational pathways that prepare students to act. Findings suggest essential components of these pathways are cultivating the ability to talk across difference, a deeper recognition of the ways social identities and affects impact our attempts to change, and a better understanding of how change is made.

SHIFTING ATTENTION: A FEMINIST-HUMANITIES MODEL FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

By

Rachel L. Carter

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Dedications

No one completes a project of this magnitude without the love, support, and encouragement of amazing fellow humans. I wish to thank the following especially.

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To pay attention, this is our endless and proper work.

–Mary Oliver, from *Yes! No!,* 1994

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: The Research Problem

In the final scene of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the animals have staged a

seemingly successful rebellion to free themselves from the neglect of Mr. Jones, the

human owner of Manor Farm. However, by the book's end, there has been a curious

reversal: although the Rebellion was intended to create a farm owned and run by the

animal collective, the pigs have positioned themselves as the farm's leaders through

incremental, hidden, and calculated maneuvers. The pigs have moved into the farmhouse,

taken to wearing clothes, sleeping in beds, drinking alcohol, and walking on their hind

legs. These behaviors break the Seven Commandments established early in the book after

the Rebellion, commandments that over time have been removed from the record and

erased from the memories of most of the animals. In the book's final scene, the pigs are

in the farmhouse meeting with the human owners of the surrounding farms who have

come to learn how the pigs took control of Animal Farm. The humans are impressed that

the pigs have been able to extract from the other animals a high degree of dedication and

hard work with few rations or other material benefits. The final line of the book is: "The

creatures outside [looking in through the farmhouse window] looked from pig to man,

and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say

which was which" (Orwell, 1996/1946, p. 139). In this final moment, the other animals

realize the pigs have become indistinguishable from the humans, who Old Major, an

elder pig and the visionary who paved the way for the Rebellion, named as their

oppressors in the opening chapter. The pigs have become their oppressors. Orwell ends

his *fairy story* at this significant moment.

Each semester, in an undergraduate general education diversity course, I ask students to read this Orwell classic. I engage his allegory to teach about power structures: how they are built and maintained, the challenges of dismantling them, and the tendency of the oppressed to take on the guise of the oppressor after gaining power. To open the class discussion, I ask students: Does *Animal Farm* have a tragic or hopeful ending? Semester after semester, students are nearly unanimous in their verdict of a tragic ending. I argue that their interpretation tells us much about students' complacent orientation to justice issues: a complacency that must be dislodged if the goal is to prepare students to act for social change. The animals looking through the farmhouse window at the end of the *Animal Farm* are like the students on the final day of class, following a semester-long consciousness-raising project around issues of justice. In this moment, students see the world through new eyes, as class materials have revealed American social structures and the power relations that organize them. How we navigate this moment is the pivotal turn in social justice education. In this moment, despair is an easy place to land. However, hope is an essential element of transformative justice.

Regarding feminist change projects, Sara Ahmed (2004b) says:

The question of how feminist attachments might open up different possibilities of living reminds us that feminism cannot be reduced to that which it is against, even if what it is against is irreducible. Feminism is also 'for' something other, a 'for-ness' that does not simply take the shape of what it is against. (p. 178)

My aim with this dissertation was to develop a curriculum of *for-ness*: a teaching and learning model to dislodge students' complacency so they might consider new ways of living and doing. Such a curriculum must disrupt the sense of inevitability that leads

students to view the ending of *Animal Farm* as tragic. The farm animals held the

Rebellion to create a better life where all animals would benefit from their collective

labor. However, in this final moment, the animals realize their situation is now worse

than before the Rebellion. By manipulating language and grabbing power, the pigs have

created a system where only they benefit from the animals' work. When I question

students about why they see the ending as tragic, they point to this inevitability. They feel

Orwell is saying the animals should never have rebelled; the Rebellion was never going

to work; thus, it was wasted effort. Their responses are like those of Benjamin, a donkey

in the book. Since "donkeys live a long time" (p. 47), Benjamin feels he can say with

authority that the more things change, the more they stay the same: patterns simply

repeat. This signals both despair and a passive acceptance of what is. I argue this is not

what Orwell wants us to conclude. In fact, this represents a common misinterpretation of

his allegory.[1] Benjamin is the cynical intellectual who observes and diagnoses the

problem; however, he does not want to get involved. He is confident the outcome cannot

be changed. This is mirrored through a common refrain I have identified in student

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[1] Orwell famously refused to explain his intention with *Animal Farm*, writing in his letters, "if it does not speak for itself, it is a failure" (as quoted by Letemendia, 1992). V.C. Letemendia (1992) states, "The text does indeed stand alone to reveal Orwell's consistent belief not only in democratic Socialism, but in the possibility of a democratic Socialist revolution…" (p. 127). Letemendia provides evidence outside the text to corroborate this interpretation. His main sources are two prefaces to the text written by Orwell (only one of which was published), along with Orwell's correspondence with friends and acquaintances about the text. And, similar to my own textual interpretation, Letemendia says, "The final scene of the book, moreover, reveals the disillusionment of the working beasts with their porcine leaders, an essential step in the process of creating a new revolution" (p. 129), an interpretation he shares with Raymond Williams (1971, pp. 74-75), as described in his book *Orwell*. Letemendia offers several quotes from Orwell's letter to his friend Dwight Macdonald (1946), where he discusses the misinterpretations of his work and the lack of imagination employed in considering alternatives to the common interpretations on the Right and the Left. As I tell my students, Orwell is asking us to *imagine otherwise* (Gordon, 1997). Letemendia says further, "So it is that, in the last moment of the book, he leaves open the task of rebuilding the revolution on a wiser and more cautiously optimistic foundation" (p. 137). Similar to my interpretation of this final scene, this is the pivotal moment where the veil is lifted and the animals see their folly. This recognition builds the animals' capacity for more thoughtful future change. For other similar arguments on Orwell's intention, see also Pearce (2005) and Rossi (2012).

writing where they say some version of, *Inequity has always existed and always will*. Just as it does with Benjamin, this belief justifies their inaction by confirming the inevitable failure of change efforts. Benjamin represents the passive acceptance of hegemonic structures and the belief that it is not possible to achieve a more equitable future. However, I argue that, along with Boxer, Clover, Napoleon, and other members of Animal Farm, Benjamin represents our folly. Orwell subtitles this work *A fairy story* because allegories are teaching tools. I argue that Orwell wants to guide us beyond our passive acceptance of *what is* so we can ask *what may be* with our effort (Ahmed, 2004b; Greene, 2009). Ahmed (2004b) tells us, "Wonder is about learning to see the world as something that does not have to be, and as something that came to be, over time, and with work. As such, wonder involves learning" (p. 180). Through the allegory of *Animal Farm*, Orwell asks us to engage wonder to consider a different future and what would be required to build it.

In this final scene, the animals—like students at the end of a social justice course—are in a precarious space: they hold new knowledge of how their lives have been organized through the power structure built by the pigs. The proverbial veil has lifted, and now they see their conditions more clearly. Their new knowledge is a seed that could be nurtured into liberatory consciousness (Freire, 1970); this seed holds the potential to transform their condition, but only if they resist despair and embrace a *for-ness* (Ahmed, 2004b) that allows them to move forward differently. And within social justice curricula, this is possible only if this pivotal and precarious moment is transformed into a creative space—a space of wonder—where students can imagine a more just world and build their capacity to achieve it.

My analogy of the students at the end of the course and the animals at the end of *Animal Farm* is a framing device that helped me ask questions about students' course experiences and course learning. This inquiry led me to identify curricular components and pedagogical tools that could bridge this pivotal moment and prepare students to act for change. From this framework, I have assembled a decidedly different approach to diversity education: a transformative model for social justice education rooted in *for-ness* (Ahmed, 2004b) to engage students' sense of wonder about what might be. I call it the Feminist-Humanities curricular model for social justice education because it is built through the confluence of these two fields of scholarship and pedagogical practice. This dissertation presents the model and investigates its impact on student learning. My main research question is: *Has the Feminist-Humanities model built students' capacity for change by providing them with the tools they need to move forward differently?*

In this chapter, I first describe my process for identifying the essential components of the model, then present a brief overview of the model's theoretical frame, followed by an introduction to this dissertation's assessment of the model's impact on student learning. As a guide through the chapters that follow, I conclude with a schematic of the model's components.

A Feminist-Humanities Curricular Model

To build students' capacity for social change, I have assembled an interdisciplinary Feminist-Humanities teaching and learning model designed to guide students as they interrogate and correct their assumptions about the social world. Toward these goals, feminist pedagogy supports the model's aims to connect individuals to their larger sociopolitical landscape, illuminate power relations within our social structures, surface

and analyze affect, and model change (Crabtree, et al., 2009). And humanities teaching and learning tools—like fiction, poetry, and personal narratives, combined with reflexive writing—support these aims through the affective heft of story, the transformative power of language analysis, and the opportunity for students to interrogate their relationship to the world and their agency to remake it. Frances A. Maher and Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault (2001) tell us a language of analysis encourages students to attend to new perspectives and thus, can prepare them to do things differently. To foster this essential element, the Feminist-Humanities model uses a narrative approach that examines the stories we tell and how and why we tell them. This achieves two goals: first, it builds students' skills in critical reading, listening, and thinking; second, it encourages students to consider how alternate social narratives can be pathways to imagine a more just world (Anzaldúa, 2010/1987; Fricker, 2007; Gordon, 1997; Greene, 2009; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Narayan, 2010/1989; Noddings, 2007; Postman, 1996; Rich, 1979/1971; Riessman, 2008). A focus on storytelling, reflexive writing, and affective analysis are the throughlines—the connective tissue—that bring feminist theories into classroom practice. Through the Feminist-Humanities model, students examine stories and narrator positionality through class readings, activities, and videos that make salient the lives of those made invisible through American power structures, while reflexive writing assignments let students tell their own stories, interrogate their assumptions through careful listening to the stories of others, and practice the model's analytic tools.

Reflexive writing assignments are anchored by a pair of formal papers that bookend the semester. Students both begin and end the course by writing a paper called *Who Am I*? This pair of assignments comprises two of the four data sources in this

dissertation. Capturing students' pre-course knowledge, then asking them to circle back at the end of the semester and use this writing as a jumping off point to narrate their learning, highlights what they now view differently. This was a useful tool for this dissertation to investigate the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model on student learning. It also proved to be a useful exercise for students. To continue my analogy, this is the necessary next step for the animals at the end of *Animal Farm*. To constructively move forward, to hold a new, potentially successful revolution, the animals first need to look back at how they arrived at the book's final scene. The animals need to consider: *What brought me to the realization that the pigs and humans are now indistinguishable*? *What do I know now that I did not know before*? *How does my new knowledge prepare me to act differently*? Like the animals, asking how they arrived here—at the end of the semester—allows students to wonder how they might move forward differently to achieve different outcomes. Therefore, this pair of writing assignments supported the student learning goals of the Feminist-Humanities model while also providing useful data about the model's pedagogical impact.

Course Context

Through its focus on justice, the Feminist-Humanities model enacts a different approach to the traditional diversity course. Rather than focusing on the feel-good aspects of diversity (Ahmed, 2007), the model aims to disrupt students' inaccurate assumptions about the social world (Fisher, 2001), correct their misinterpretations (Fricker, 2007), and dislodge their political complacency (Ahmed, 2004b; Fisher, 2001; Fricker, 2007; Gordon, 1997). As a stand-alone course, and given the stage of development of traditionally aged undergraduate students, their degree of homogeneity, and their often

privileged and unexamined worldview, the model must have realistic outcomes.

However, articulating realistic outcomes is a common challenge for social justice courses (James, 1998). True change occurs over time and within a reflexive structure that demands continual reexamination of assumptions and repositioning of knowledge (James, 1998). There are academic curricula with a comprehensive structure for this work, such as programs in gender and women's, race, ethnic, and postcolonial studies, and the scholarship of these fields has deeply informed the Feminist-Humanities model. However, as Gloria Anzaldúa (2013/1992) says, these critical frameworks are often relegated to the "bordered off sections in the curriculum" and given a minority status outside the traditional academic disciplines (p. 278). Although they carry the burden of add-on courses outside the disciplinary structure, diversity courses benefit from their ubiquity in general education curricula. Of course, this also brings students from a broad continuum of readiness to learn about issues of justice. Given these considerations, in developing the model, I asked: What are reasonable markers of learning within a one-semester course for students from a variety of academic and sociopolitical backgrounds? Which pedagogical interventions have the greatest impact on student learning? Which analytic tools have staying power, providing a language of analysis that may stick with students after the course is over? Toward answering these questions, I began by identifying the structural barriers the model would need to address if its aim is to build students' capacity for transformative social change.

The Local Level

I collected data at a mid-Atlantic state university during one spring semester. There are twenty-four student-participants, each of whom were enrolled in the same section of

the course for which I was the sole instructor. According to the information provided to me by the University, during the academic year when I collected data, there were just over 18,000 enrolled undergraduate students. Female-identified students comprised 60% of those enrolled, and 62% identified as White. The remaining students identified as 16% Black/African American, 6% Hispanic, 5% Asian, 4% Two or More Races, 2% Foreign, less than 1% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, less than 1% as Native American/Pacific Islander, and just over 3% were identified as Race Unknown.[2] The university's student population contrasts with the nearest urban area, where the population is around 60% Black/African American.

The course under investigation is a 200-level general education course in multiculturalism and diversity. It is required for education majors but also fulfills a diversity requirement within the general education curriculum. On average, just over half of enrolled students are pre-service teacher candidates; the remainder come from a variety of majors and minors. The course was developed by a small team of tenure track faculty members in the final months of the 1990s, when the term *diversity* moved from business buzzword to academic trend. Establishing the course was an achievement, and it has been going strong for twenty years. Each fall and spring semester, a combination of tenure track and adjunct faculty teach approximately fifteen course sections, each with approximately twenty-five students. Now firmly established within the university and popular with students, the course is a significant revenue-generator.

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[2] I have used rounded numbers for easier reading. See Appendix A for the complete student demographic numbers for Spring 2015 supplied by the university.

I began teaching the course in its second year, and I quickly became uncomfortable with the term *diversity*. While not yet able to fully articulate it, I felt the term got in the way of what the course was intended to do. From my observations, a diversity frame led to surface level examinations of course content that lacked a critical lens. Additionally, students were alienated by the social science-based textbook used by most faculty (including me). In my experience, the text allowed largely privileged students to view examinations of injustice around identity constructs—such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, and more—as abstract aberrations outside their own experience. In their writing and class discussions, students commonly described themselves as *normal*, *just average*. Therefore, they tended to mark identity only for those they considered *other*. As a result, like Benjamin in *Animal Farm*, students maintained an academic distance and did not become involved with course materials. To correct this, one aim of the Feminist-Humanities model was to get students involved in the course material by guiding them to recognize its connection to their lives.

To identify elements that could build these connections, I had to move beyond the local course context and explore the larger historical and sociopolitical context of diversity curricula. I began by reviewing the scholarship of critical theory and critical pedagogy. And while this literature took me some way toward my goal, it was not until my introduction to feminist theory, and later feminist pedagogy, that my ideas began to coalesce into the Feminist-Humanities model. Feminist critiques helped me build a richer and more expansive view of the limitations of diversity education and the barriers the model would need to push against.

Diversity and Multiculturalism: The Socio-Political Landscape

Feminist scholars offered critical tools of analysis to guide my development of the Feminist-Humanities curricular model. Importantly, they describe the lack of student agency that results from common approaches to *diversity* and *multicultural education*. In her overview of how these terms are enacted, Dorothy Smith (1996) says the collective demands for justice in full swing during the 1960s gained traction in the academy of the 1970s. However, soon after, a postmodern understanding of *difference* stalled this collective energy. Taking advantage of this loss of momentum, the growing political power of the New Right issued a conservative backlash against identity politics. Smith says the new trends in *diversity* and *multiculturalism* were initially intended to cement the gains of the earlier social movements; however, stalled collective action allowed conservatives to co-opt the trend for their own aims. The result was a move away from the goals of social justice that are integral to transformative collective action and toward an appreciation for diversity within a neoliberal context.

David Harvey (2005) defines *neoliberalism* as "a theory of political economic practices that propose that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p 2). In essence, it is a belief that individual rights and individual responsibilities are key to a productive society. According to Harvey, neoliberalism has deeply informed Western sociopolitical policies and practices since the 1970s. It is easy to see how conservatives would embrace this ideology in response to the systemic oppressions made visible through collective calls for justice. A focus on individual rights and responsibilities

11

erases identity markers of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, and more, and instead celebrates and punishes individuals for their successes and failures. The critiques of neoliberal diversity discourses by feminist scholars Dorothy Smith, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Sara Ahmed were crucial for helping me recognize the mechanisms of this erasure.

Dorothy Smith (1996) traces how the academic radicalism of the 1950s led to the political activism of the 1960s. In particular, she explores the Women's Movement and its hegemonic disruption through examinations first of gender, then class, then race, then sexuality. She says the "hydra of contending groups" (p. 49) within this dynamic movement pushed at the margins through continual debate, the layering of multiple and varied perspectives, and active connections between groups. This process linked radical academia with community activism in a swell of collective political change. However, Smith says the postmodern focus on difference, a renewal of repressive politics, and the shift in university structures toward the needs of global capitalism led her field of sociology to lose its connection to the lives of the subjugated. Smith says to reinvigorate political agency, it is necessary to reconnect academic discourse with lived experience. With this aim in mind, the Feminist-Humanities model explicitly links lived experience to the larger landscape to illuminate the complex ways individuals negotiate oppressive sociopolitical structures.

Regarding the same forces described by Smith, Gloria Anzaldúa (2013/1992) says, "This multiculturalism appropriation/misappropriation is an attempt to control difference by allocating it to bordered-off sections in the curriculum. Diversity is then treated as a superficial overlay that does not disrupt any comfort zones" (p. 278). As a corrective, the Feminist-Humanities model is designed to intentionally disrupt comfort zones and teach

into the resulting discomfort by shifting students' attention from an individual to a structural perspective. Anzaldúa also speaks of the challenges faced in higher education by those who seek systemic social change and the personal and professional toll it takes to fight on. She characterizes these border-crossers, whether *mestiza* or progressive whites, as "bookworms gnawing holes in the canon; we are termites undermining the canonical curriculum's foundation" (p. 280). Anzaldúa says working for social change requires us to continually examine our positionality and how it intersects with our motivations to do this work. She says it is necessary to ask ourselves, "What's in it for you? What is the motivation behind your border-crossing?" (p. 282). She speaks specifically to progressive whites, like me; however, she makes it clear that all who work for change must continually ask themselves these questions because understanding our motives is a complex, ongoing process we must struggle to make conscious. She highlights the importance of continually interrogating who you are and how who you are impacts your work. In chapters two and three I will demonstrate how this theme emerges again in both feminist pedagogy—the Feminist-Humanities model's main theoretical frame—and in narrative analysis—the research methodology used in this dissertation. Like everything within feminist theory, the struggle is central to the work, and the struggle is an ongoing, messy, complex, and often contradictory process in which self-reflexivity is a crucial tool. Responding to Anzaldúa, the Feminist-Humanities model centers self-reflexivity through student writing assignments across the semester.

Sara Ahmed (2007) examines the ways language organizes our values. She says diversity discourse throws a "soft blanket over the hard negativity of racism" (p. 244). Although it is positioned as a way of "getting over" racism and moving forward, Ahmed

says appreciating diversity leaves inequities unexamined and, thus, unchallenged. She says, "To get over [racism] before it is over would be to keep things in place" (p. 251). As such, diversity talk supports hegemony. Ahmed describes the "image management" (p. 245) aspect of diversity talk within higher education and the ways the term is used to create positive feeling. Her interviewees (twenty diversity practitioners from twenty universities across the U.K. and Australia) describe how this term won out over *racism*, which makes people feel bad, and *equality*, which calls for active steps toward systemic change. By contrast, *diversity* is a "cuddly" (p. 244) term that allows people to feel good without demanding change. Like a bad apple, it conceals beneath a "shiny surface" the "rotten core" of oppression and inequity (p. 244). As Ahmed learned through her investigation," Not only does this re-branding of the university as being diverse work to conceal racism, but it also works to re-imagine the university as being anti-racist and even beyond race" (p. 244). Ahmed draws on the previous work of both bell hooks and Audre Lorde to examine how a discourse of diversity locates the bad feeling of racism within the bodies of difference. Ahmed says, when a university focuses on diversity, these bodies are expected to be grateful and to smile for photographs the university will use to illustrate its commitment to diversity. Several years ago, a student described to me a similar experience. As an African American within a predominantly white institution, she was featured in several university publications and websites. She said it made her feel uncomfortable. As Ahmed articulates it, the happy image displayed through such photographs comes with conditions that silence authentic discussions of inequity. As such, those who are angry about subjugation are viewed as *killjoys* (Ahmed, 2007), or

14

people who destroy the good feeling created by diversity talk.[3] Inspired by Ahmed's critique, the Feminist-Humanities model uses language analysis as an important teaching tool to reveal the ways words organize our thinking and determine what we see and what we value.

The Feminist-Humanities model responds to the critiques of diversity and multiculturalism from Smith, Anzaldúa, and Ahmed by shifting students' attention through examining the ways the lived experiences of the marginalized are created by the hierarchies of our larger sociopolitical landscape. To disrupt neoliberal discourses, students explore the ways individuals make choices and act as they negotiate social structures and their power hierarchies, helping them better understand why and how people positioned differently experience the world differently. To support these aims, the model uses language investigations to examine the work occurring beneath our word choices and self-reflexive writing assignments to interrogate and complicate students' assumptions about others and the social world.

The Sociopolitical Landscape: Teaching Social Justice in Neoliberal Times

…in a stratified society such as ours, language choices are not neutral.

(Delpit, 1995, p. 68)

Armed with greater knowledge of the history of diversity discourses and their uses through my review of feminist scholarship, my next step was to further widen my view to look more closely at the influence of neoliberal discourses and policies on the larger systems of American education so I could position how the Feminist-Humanities model

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[3] Consequently, Ahmed (2007) says her research team produced a diversity report deemed too negative by her university, too focused on racism; thus, it was never published. Her university was looking for more "positive stories" (p. 248). Because the report went against the image the university had of itself and wanted to project to the world, it was silenced.

would respond to these challenges. Because whether or not it is explicitly asked, beneath ongoing debates about educational policy, the central question is: *What is the purpose of education*? Current educational discourse is centered on *accountability* and illustrated through systems of standardized testing and credentialing (Lipman, 2009; Noddings, 2007). From this position, the answer becomes *personal responsibility*, where success lies in the hands of individual teachers and individual students within a system that rewards and punishes individuals for their outcomes. This has efficacy in a society committed to individualism, shaped by neoliberal policy, and centered on free-market capitalism. However, it lacks veracity when even a surface-level investigation of American educational outcomes reveals deep inequity at all levels in access to the resources and forms of knowledge that lead to material success: inequities that can be traced along intersecting lines of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, and more (Lipman, 2009). In chapter two I present the theoretical scholarship that helped me build a curricular model to challenge neoliberal discourses and establish transformative learning as its educative purpose. Toward these aims, the model guides students to examine social identities and the ways they limit or expand access to resources. And since a focus on individualism produces a barrier to students' understanding of the goals and actions of social justice, which require collective solutions, the model illuminates structural inequities to reveal the complex ways individuals make choices and act as they negotiate social structures that organize and align them and confer advantages or disadvantages based on identities.

However, raising awareness is only half the equation if the curricular goal is transformational learning. Like my *Animal Farm* analogy, social justice education has

two inextricable halves: the first is consciousness-raising, and the second is action. If the teaching and learning model cannot guide students through the first stage and prepare them for the second, it risks leaving students in limbo, unsure of how to move forward with their newfound knowledge once the class is over. Through the consciousness-raising stage, students begin to recognize that the world is not what they thought it to be, what they were told it was, and they find themselves implicated in its power structures. The epistemic project of the Feminist-Humanities model aims to help students reposition their knowledge within a more authentic understanding of American society and its power hierarchies. The typical student begins the course believing in a meritocracy where the American Dream is achievable for all who work for it. By the end of the semester, students tend to either resist the unfamiliar counter knowledge presented through the model, or they are overcome by the loss of this sacred American mythology. If we cannot move students from consciousness to *for-ness* (Ahmed, 2004), they risk falling into either denial or despair, either of which deactivate their agency for change. The model aims to build a bridge from awareness to action.

After gaining a deeper understanding of the course's local, historical, and sociopolitical context, I was able to identify essential theoretical components of a curricular model of *for-ness*. Based on this assessment, I developed the Feminist-Humanities model for social justice education, which combines the ethical stance of feminist pedagogy with humanities learning tools in an epistemic project that pushes against neoliberal discourses to build students' capacity for social transformation. In the following sections, I first introduce the model's theoretical frame and the ways it is informed by the confluence of feminist pedagogy and the humanities ways of knowing,

along with examples of how I activate these principles in the classroom. Then I introduce

narrative analysis, the methodology used in this dissertation, and describe why it was an

elegant fit for investigating the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model on student

learning.

Theoretical Frame of the Feminist-Humanities Curricular Model

Feminist Pedagogy

Feminist pedagogies are a series of processes, never 'done' and always evolving.

(Maher, 1998/1987, p. 25)

Emerging from feminist theory, feminist pedagogy is an epistemic stance that

explores power relations and emphasizes the value of personal experience toward its

explicit goal of social transformation. Robbin D. Crabtree, David Alan Sapp, and Adela

C. Licona (2009) define feminist pedagogy as "a movement against hegemonic

educational practices that tacitly accept or more forcefully reproduce an oppressively

gendered, classed, racialized, and androcentric social order" (p. 1); as such, it supports

the model's aim to disrupt hegemonic neoliberal discourses and connect lived experience

to social structures and their power hierarchies.

Feminist pedagogy grew out of the cultural upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s,

including the movements for civil rights, economic justice, peace, women's liberation,

and gay rights, as well as progressive educational movements and the development of

critical pedagogy inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1970) (Crabtree,

et al., 2009). However, as important as each of these movements has been to the

evolution of critical thought and political action, other than the Women's Liberation

Movement, they have ignored issues of gender. As Crabtree, et al. (2009) describe, the

practice of feminist pedagogy is rooted in critical pedagogy; however, it further critiques the predominantly male perspective still central in critical pedagogy. Its aim to *decenter the center* (Maher & Tetreault, 2001) and expand our understanding of knowledge and who we recognize as holders of knowledge is foundational to how the Feminist-Humanities model shifts students' attention (Fisher, 2001) by highlighting the experiences of those located on our social margins. Centering marginalized and silenced voices provides stories that counter mainstream discourses and challenge students' commonly held assumptions about the social world and how it operates; the use of counterstories—or stories that provide the grounds to interrogate and deconstruct mainstream discourses—is an important element of feminist consciousness-raising.

As the quotation at the beginning of this section makes clear, feminist pedagogy is founded on the shifting sands of always unfinished, dialogic work. As such, Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, (2009) say it may be best defined through the questions it asks. Drawing on the work of Sara Munson Deats and Lagretta Tallent Lenker (1994), Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona (2009) say, "The growing body of literature on feminist pedagogy has posed and attempted to answer the following questions: What do we teach and why? How do we teach and why? How does what and how we teach impact our students and our communities?" (p. 3). Importantly, each of these three questions forges an explicit link between the individual and the social, sending cracks through mainstream neoliberal discourses regarding both the purpose and intended outcomes of our educational efforts. Therefore, these questions are a useful foundation from which to build a social justice curriculum that aims to link the individual and the social to disrupt neoliberal discourses.

Feminist pedagogy addresses these questions through analytic tools that offer:

19

…important complexities such as questioning the notion of a coherent social

subject or essential identity, articulating the multifaceted and shifting nature of

identities and oppressions, viewing the history and value of feminist

consciousness-raising as distinct from Freirean methods, and focusing as much on

the interrogation of the teacher's consciousness and social location as on the

student's. (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009, p. 3)

In the classroom, practitioners of feminist pedagogy demonstrate a deep care for their

students within non-hierarchical, reciprocal teaching and learning relationships. As such,

it represents a fundamental subversion of the traditional practice of classroom teaching

that divorces emotion from learning and views the instructor as the lone figure of

classroom authority. Feminist pedagogy requires educators to work through many aspects

of the teaching and learning process, from how we *value teaching* within a university

system that creates a binary between teaching and research in which teaching is

subordinate (Golden, 1998/1995); to how we view *authority*, inside and outside the

classroom (Bauer, 2009/1991; Caughie & Pearce, 2009/1992; Crabtree & Sapp, 2003;

Maher, 1998/1987); to our strategies for how students demonstrate *mastery* of course

material (MacDonald, 2002; Maher & Tetreault, 2001). Margo Culley and Catherine

Portuges (2013/1985) say, "... changing *what* we teach, means changing *how* we teach"

(p. 2, emphasis in original). Feminist pedagogy aims to change how we teach at every

level, as it reimagines the purpose of education. These subversions, along with the three

questions identified by Crabtree, et al. (2009), make feminist pedagogy a solid foundation

from which to build a curricular model aimed at transformational learning. Because of

their centrality to feminist pedagogy, the Feminist-Humanities model, and the assessment

of the model's impact on student learning presented in this dissertation, the discussion

that follows is organized around the three questions identified by Crabtree, et al. (2009).

Teaching for Social Transformation

The Feminist-Humanities model responds to the first question, *What do we teach

and why*?, through its overarching aim to build students' capacity for social

transformation, an aim is shares with feminist pedagogy. This in turn informs how the

model responds to the second question, *How do we teach and why*? The Feminist-

Humanities model uses teaching strategies that model social change in the classroom

through course materials, assignments, and assessments that interrogate knowledge

within an ongoing reflexive process. The model has two essential humanities-based tools

that inform these curricular elements: storytelling and reflexive writing.

Storytelling

Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett (2008) tell us that stories

exist at the intersection of the individual and the social, where psychology meets social

construction and social discourse. As a fundamental process of self-creation at this

intersection (Maynes, et al., 2008), stories offer a nuanced view of how individuals

experience and interpret the world, making them a powerful teaching tool to link the

individual and social to elucidate more expansive, nuanced, and accurate knowledge of

the social world. Using stories in the classroom lets students view whole persons within

their context and history in ways that illuminate their complexity and contradictions.

Avery Gordon (1997) refers to this as *complex personhood*, which she describes as a rich,

complicated, and holistic understanding of whole persons. As such, stories link individual

lives to their social context. For these reasons, I have chosen storytelling as the guiding

metaphor of the Feminist-Humanities model. As such storytelling informs the course sequence, the choice of teaching materials, and the design of assessments. And explicitly centering the stories of those on our social margins presents the counterstories and counterknowledges that allow students to examine the intersectional tensions as individuals negotiate oppressive social structures and their relations of power. This examination holds the potential to build both students' cognitive and emotional capacities.

Reflexive Writing

John Bean (2011) says well-planned writing assignments can "evoke a high level of critical thinking" (p. 2), encouraging students to think deeply about course concepts. However, the Feminist-Humanities model goes farther to pair cognitive analysis with affective analysis to also explore the body level impacts of oppressive social structures. Through pairing the cognitive and the affective, the Feminist-Humanities model aims to build both students' *desire* for change (Fisher, 2001)[4] and their capacity to achieve it. Engaging both students' cognitive and emotional capacities is a complex process that requires time, space, and intentional course design. The model uses reflexive writing assignments to provide students with the time and space to bring together these two capacities within the learning process. As Miranda Fricker (2007) describes it, reflexive writing encourages students to enter a learning mode through which they "shift intellectual gear out of spontaneous, unreflective mode and into active critical reflection"

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[4] In her discussion of the *desire* for change, Fisher (2001) draws on the work of Aida Hurtado (1996), who is interested in a consciousness-raising that, beyond "illuminating oppression," focuses "on the relation between talk and action" (p. 43). Fisher continues, "Talk connects to action by way of desire. Consciousness-raising promotes action when it taps into desire for social justice and into a recognition that joining with others promotes that end" (p. 43). Thus, this is an important concept of my theoretical frame, as it helps build the bridge between awareness and action.

so they can identify and investigate the influence of prejudice on their judgments of others (p. 91). Thus, shifting students' attention[5] to engage them in critical reflection is an essential component of the Feminist-Humanities model.

Key to engendering these shifts, the model asks students to reserve judgment while they listen to understand as storytellers describe their lives. After careful listening, students interrogate what these stories can tell them about our larger social landscape. Writing assignments ask students to examine our knowledge products—norms, practices, policies, and laws—and their real-world impacts as described through these stories. Specifically, students examine how knowledge products are used and who benefits and who suffers from their outcomes, outcomes both intended and unintended. In a curricular model that aims to develop students' skills of lifelong, ongoing interrogation, reflexive writing is a powerful teaching tool. For this reason, the Feminist-Humanities model uses reflexive writing assignments, both formal and informal, as the main form of academic performance across the semester. Through a reflexive loop of counterstories and reflexive writing, the model engages students in active critical reflection (Fricker, 2007), providing the opportunity for students to write themselves into political consciousness (Reed, 2010/2005; Rich, 1979/1971). Importantly, this struggle to know ties together each of the components of the Feminist-Humanities model in a process-oriented, semester-long epistemic project.

Assessing the impact of the Feminist-Humanities Model on Student Learning

This dissertation was designed to investigate the first part of the third question posed by feminist pedagogy (Crabtree, et al., 2009): *How does what and how we teach*

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[5] See also Fisher (2001).

impact our students and our communities? As described in the research problem that opens this chapter, my main research question is: *Has the Feminist-Humanities model built students' capacity for change by providing them with the tools they need to move forward differently?* To investigate this question, I chose narrative analysis as my research methodology because its goals align with those of both feminist pedagogy and the humanities ways of knowing. Like feminist pedagogy, narrative analysis centers the ethical and the epistemic in the interaction of the investigator and the research participants from data collection, to analysis, to interpreting and presenting findings. It is also an elegant fit to investigate narrative-based, reflexive student writing in a course centered around a metaphor of storytelling. Reflexive writing captures the evolving narrative of learning, as students evaluate and reposition their knowledge of themselves and the social world based on their interactions with the stories of the marginalized presented through the course materials. Additionally, due to the co-constitutive nature of language and thought (Saville-Troike, 2003), an analysis of student narratives offers a concrete way to locate individual-level shifts in attention within the struggle to know. In locating these shifts, narrative analysis has an advantage over other forms of language analysis because it does not segment language; thus, it preserves context as an element of analysis, viewing student-participants as whole persons within the rich and expansive context of their writing, as they wrestle with course concepts and complex ideas. Because personal narratives exist at the intersection of the individual and the social (Maynes et al., 2008), narrative descriptions of student learning offer the opportunity to examine this intersection at the moment of co-constitution. Because it captures the struggle to learn, just as in the model itself, reflexivity is a central tool of this investigation, and each data

source was chosen to interrogate a different reflexive perspective on the implementation and impact of the Feminist-Humanities model. The data sources are:

1. **Individual student reflexive writing assignments**

A pair of reflexive writing assignments bookend the semester. They are the *Who Am I?* Part I paper, which students submitted at the second class session, and the *Who Am I?* Part II Final Learning Analysis, which students submitted as their take-home final examination.[6] The first paper captures students' pre-course knowledge around the major course concepts. For the final paper, students were asked to begin by re-reading their first paper and then describe if and how their understanding of these concepts had expanded or altered as a result of their course learning; they were also asked to name and discuss the course materials that helped them achieve new perspectives. Taken together, these bookended assignments offered a window into the learning process of individual students. In the language of Avery Gordon (1997), narrative analysis of these student papers allowed me to take account of students '*complex personhood* within the messy nature of learning, as they narrated their journey through course materials and interrogated the ways their cultural assumptions are informed by their social identities and their power positions. Viewing these two papers as evolving moments of self-creation allowed me to locate the *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001) that indicate new knowledge.

I began my investigation with a close reading of each student's first and final paper. I looked for markers of learning, such as changes in word choices and indications that students had taken up the language of analysis provided through the Feminist-

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[6] Hereafter, I refer to these assignments as students' first and final papers.

Humanities model. Making note of course materials mentioned by students, I was able to gather details about if and how students were moved by specific pedagogical interventions. Following this initial, individual-level examination of each student, I began to look at connections and divergences across the twenty-four student-participants. In particular, I made note of words that repeated across students and common course materials students described as having significant impact on their learning. Beyond individual level learning, this offered a broader perspective on the group experience and indications of which pedagogical choices had the greatest impact.

2. Instructor reflexive writing

The second data source is the teacher/researcher journal I kept during data collection, through which I captured thick descriptions of individual class sessions, interactions with and among students, classroom discussions, and my observations of student reactions to course materials. The journal captures both my reflexive teaching process and classroom dynamics. This document was most useful after I completed the individual-level investigation of each student-participant's first and final paper. In tandem with these initial results, the journal, in particular the classroom dynamics and student reactions to course materials, helped me locate moments when students' attention shifted. Taken together, students' first and final papers along with my journal entries expanded and deepened my understanding of significant classroom moments and the model's impact. Each of these data sources provide different perspectives on the ground-level struggle to learn, the challenges, and the breakthroughs.

3. Social learning

The third and final data source is transcriptions of the focus group facilitated by my

colleague, Heidi Faust, during the final class session. I did not attend the focus group; Heidi used a set of questions I developed to gather student feedback about the specific components of the Feminist-Humanities model and how students described the impact on their learning. The focus group was divided into two parts. First, students worked in small groups of 4-5 to answer a set of questions; each small group chose one member as their facilitator. Second, Heidi facilitated a large group discussion around a second set of questions. This data source continued the centrality of the reflexive learning process. However, what I had not considered prior to my data analysis is the way it also gave students an opportunity to interact with their fellow classmates as they explored, synthesized, and articulated their course learning. Importantly, like the model itself, the focus group connected the individual student-participant data from their first and final papers and the dynamics of individual class sessions captured in my journal to a broader perspective on course learning. As I will describe in chapter five, this data led to significant insights about the model's impact while also underscoring the need for students to interact with each other to ask questions about what they have learned and how their learning was achieved. The focus group conversations challenge and extend the learning described in the final papers of individual student-participants and go well beyond anything I captured in my journal.

Informed consent

On the first day of class, I gave students a brief overview of the research project and an informed consent document so they could declare their choice of whether to participate. The research project and informed consent document[7] were approved by both

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[7] See Appendix B for informed consent document.

the university where I taught the course and the university where I am enrolled as a doctoral student. Students were told their decision to participate in the study could be reversed at any point throughout the semester, up to and including the final class session. All twenty-four students signed the consent form, and none retracted their participation. All names in this dissertation are pseudonyms.[8]

A Feminist-Humanities Model for Social Justice Education:

A Curriculum of *For-ness*

As a guide through the in-depth discussions in the chapters that follow, below is a schematic of the Feminist-Humanities model, its components, and how it responds to the questions posed by feminist pedagogy (Crabtree, et al., 2009). The schematic also highlights the connections among the model's approach to teaching—feminist pedagogy—, approach to learning—the humanities ways of knowing—, and the research design of this dissertation.

1. *What do we teach and why*?: **Principles of feminist pedagogy**

- Modeling social change

- Decentering the center: using counterstories and counterknowledge

- Illuminating relations of power

2. *How do we teach and why*?: **Humanities ways of knowing**

- Storytelling/counterstories

- Reflexive writing

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[8] See Appendix C for a list of student-participants and their demographic self-descriptions. All names are pseudonyms.

3. ***How does what and how we teach impact our students and our***

   ***communities*?**

- Feminist narrative analysis

- *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001; Fricker, 2007)

Shared components: feminist pedagogy, humanities ways of knowing, and narrative

analysis

- Connecting the individual and the social

- Storytelling/counterstories

- Deep context and *complex personhood* (Gordon, 1997)

- Language analysis

- Affective analysis

- Reflexivity

Overview of the Dissertation

- Chapter two provides a detailed description of the theoretical framework of the
  Feminist-Humanities model and discusses how it brings together feminist
  pedagogy and the humanities ways of knowing.

- Chapter three provides a detailed description of feminist narrative analysis and the
  ways it supports the components and aims of the Feminist-Humanities model in
  this investigation of the model's impact on student learning.

- Chapter four presents the first two *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001) identified
  through my analysis. In shift one, student-participants enter a learning mode of
  active critical reflection (Fricker, 2007); in shift two, they learn to recognize how
  social structures organize and inform our lives. I present evidence of these shifts

through quotations from student writing and focus group conversations and

discuss students' descriptions of how the shifts were achieved.

- Chapter five presents the third *shift in attention* (Fisher, 2001) identified through

  my analysis. In shift three, students bring together the intellectual and the

  emotional through affective analysis that demands change. I demonstrate this shift

  through quotations from student writing and focus group conversations and

  discuss students' descriptions of how their learning was achieved. I also present

  my analysis of three students who resisted the learning offered through the

  Feminist-Humanities model and discuss what their forms of resistance can reveal

  about the complex ways the student experience in a social justice course is

  informed by students' social identities.

- Chapter six summarizes my findings, discusses their implications for social

  justice curricula in higher education—especially in this historical moment—, and

  makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical Framework of the Feminist-Humanities Curricular Model

The Feminist-Humanities model for social justice education brings together concepts of feminist theory, feminist pedagogy, and the humanities ways of knowing in ways that overlap and reinforce each other and leverage their shared aims. In this chapter I present the model's theoretical framework and how it brings together these fields of scholarship to create a curricular model that aims to build student' capacity for transformative social change. I also describe how the teaching and learning model activates the theory in the curriculum and the classroom. Through this discussion, particularly in chapters four and five where I present my data interpretations, I also mention the specific course readings and activities I used during the semester under investigation. However, I view the Feminist-Humanities model as a transferable curricular structure not tied to specific course materials but built through specific forms of disruption, tools of analysis, and the sequence through which they are introduced. Thus, instructors could bring their own expertise, interests, and resources to enact the curriculum. In addition to this scaffolding, the variety of materials is also important, especially as they combine intellectual and emotional rigor, toggling between and among the two, and connected through reflexive student writing. The model is designed as a reflexive loop. It first introduces analyses of knowledge and identity to illuminate each other, then structure and its power relations through examinations of gender and sexuality, socioeconomic status, and race and ethnicity, while also teaching students to read and analyze affect. It closes by applying these tools of analysis to imagine a more just future. In the analysis chapters that follow, I present evidence that the toggle between

conceptual and applied learning and cognitive and affective analyses further deepens and extends student learning.[9]

At the end of chapter one is a schematic of the model's components. Describing its components separately is useful for explanatory purposes; however, it also flattens the dynamic way the model interweaves its components within its structure and practice. In this chapter I strive to present both the logical sequence and this dynamic nature. As a guide, I have organized the discussion around the three questions Robbin D. Crabtree, David Alan Sapp, and Adela C. Licona (2009) identified as central to the ways feminist pedagogy reimagines teaching and learning; this allows me to discuss how the Feminist-Humanities model responds to these questions. As a reminder, the questions are: *What do we teach and why? How do we teach and why? How does what and how we teach impact our students and our communities?* In response to the first two questions, I offer detailed descriptions of the theory used to build the model and the pedagogical strategies that activate them in the classroom. I close the chapter with an introduction to feminist narrative analysis, the research methodology I used to investigate the third question, along with a brief overview of how it aligns with the values and aims of the model's theoretical components.[10]

I.   What do we teach and why?

A Curriculum of *For-ness*: Beginning with the End in Mind

When designing a curriculum, experts recommend beginning at the end and working backward to ensure that each course element builds toward articulated student

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[9] See Appendix D for course syllabus.

[10] A more in-depth discussion of my research methodology can be found in chapter three.

learning outcomes (Walvoord, 2010). This is termed *backward design*. For this reason, in

developing the Feminist-Humanities model, I began with Sara Ahmed's (2004b) concept

of *for-ness*, as introduced in chapter one. Beginning with *for-ness* creates a positive

construction for the curricular model. As Ahmed says, hope is an essential ingredient for

change. To do things differently, we must first have a vision of something better to

inspire us, and this vision must feel achievable. Importantly, a focus on *for-ness* allowed

me to develop a curriculum to respond to two linked challenges in social justice

education. First, it moves discussions beyond the negativity of what is wrong toward

what we could do differently to create different outcomes; this shifts students' attention

from despair to active steps for social change. This is the pivotal moment the model aims

to bridge. While the model must examine social structures and their power hierarchies to

make salient their negative impacts in people's lives in order to cultivate students' *desire*

(Fisher, 2001) for change, *for-ness* follows this necessary deconstruction with the

opportunity for students to take what they have learned and consider how to build anew.

Second, *for-ness* is active. Beyond a passive appreciation of diversity, it shifts classroom

discussions toward what the world could be with our effort (Ahmed, 2004b). This *shift in*

attention (Fisher, 2001) is the propulsive force necessary to transform a diversity

curriculum into a curriculum for social justice. The vision of a better future can activate

students and encourage them to view themselves as empowered and necessary agents of

the rebuilding project.

The Social Imagination

Nothing happens in the 'real 'world unless it first happens in the images in our

heads. (Anzaldúa, 2013/1992, p. 261)

This quotation from Gloria Anzaldúa captures the potency of *imagining otherwise*

(Gordon, 1997) to inspire change. Avery Gordon (1997) uses the term *imagining*

otherwise when she calls on us to re-examine and reposition our knowledge of the world

by taking account of invisible others—or the *unvisible*, as she calls them—, who she

characterizes as ghosts marginalized by relations of power who haunt the periphery of

our sociological imagination. Gordon says we must follow these ghosts in our search for

more authentic social knowledge. Regarding the images in our heads, Gordon says, "We

need to know where we live in order to imagine living elsewhere. We need to imagine

living elsewhere before we can live there" (p. 5). To develop more authentic knowledge

of where we live requires that we follow the hauntings: the ghosts made invisible through

our social structures and their power hierarchies. The Feminist-Humanities model follows

the ghosts by placing their stories at the center of the curriculum through course

materials. Careful listening to these stories demands that students interrogate the images

in their heads and complicate the stereotypes that flatten the *complex personhood* of those

positioned differently.

Frances A. Maher and Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault (2001) refer to this as

decentering the center. They say, "No longer limited to the acquisition of knowledge on

the terms of the experts, the notion of mastery has been expanded by our informants

[faculty who teach from a feminist pedagogical stance] to mean the interpretation of

knowledge from the new perspectives of students, women, and other marginalized groups

whose lives represent 'the bywaters and tributaries' to mainstream academic culture" (p.

57). Through their call to decenter the center, they reiterate Dorothy Smith's (1996)

challenge to reconnect academic discourse with lived experience to reinvigorate political

agency.

The explicit decentering of the white, male perspective sets feminist pedagogy apart from other critical traditions (Crabtree, et al., 2009; hooks, 1994). Margaret Hunter (2002) says feminist pedagogy recenters our teaching in a way that does not continue the traditional place of prominence for the white male perspective that obscures the contributions of all others. Adrienne Rich (1979/1971) tells us it can be difficult to see outside the worldview of the white men of the cannon when it is how we have learned to think and interpret the world around us. For this reason, decentering is both more challenging and more important because of the prominence afforded the knowledge of white men within the curricula of American schools. Neither constructivism nor critical pedagogy unseat this voice of privilege. Hegemony perpetuates without intentional disruption; thus, the Feminist-Humanities model is a curriculum of intentional disruption. Taking account of silenced voices is the guiding tenet of the *multilogue* (Gorelick, 1996/1991), the "hydra of contending groups" (Smith, 1996, p. 49), and *multivocality* (Haraway, 1988), concepts illustrative of the ongoing conversations in feminist theory. In the language of Berenice Malka Fisher (2001), centering the experiences of the marginalized "creates a shift in attention" (p. 34). And, as I demonstrate in chapters four and five, these shifts prove to be a powerful pedagogical tool for subverting students' expectations, awakening their senses to information they previously missed, and opening them up to new possibilities.

Gordon (1997) refers to the collection of images in our heads, as Anzaldúa describes them in the quotation above, as the *sociological imagination*, and Miranda Fricker (2007) refers to them as the *social imagination* (p. 4). Fricker argues that

prejudice comes to us in the social imagination through the stereotypes that *corral* knowledge. Prejudice then informs our thoughts, values, and behaviors. Fricker (2007) says prejudice derives from the "ethical poison" (p. 22) of these tainted images and can lead to what she terms *testimonial injustice*, when we discount someone as a *knower* because of their social identities. This underscores the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the social integral to the Feminist-Humanities model. Within this relationship, Fricker cautions that "...where it is the images themselves that are tainted by prejudice, the very same capacity to impinge on judgment directly and without the subject's awareness can render the social imagination an ethical and epistemic liability" (p. 38). Thus, interrogating these images is a powerful tool for identifying prejudices and making visible the relations of power that create and maintain them. Fricker says the social imagination is "a mighty resource for social change, and this is significantly due to its capacity for informing thought directly, and thus independently of beliefs that may remain tainted with the prejudices of the day" (p. 38). Thus, changing the images in our heads can alter how we think and what we value.

As Anzaldúa makes clear, the images in our heads hold great sway over what we consider acceptable and possible, making a clear case for the importance of excavating these images as a useful starting point to build more authentic knowledge of others and the social world. Gordon (1997) says ghosts who haunt the periphery of our sociological imagination are found at the intersection of the individual and the social. Fricker (2007) would agree; she argues for the importance of interrogating the intersection of the psychological and the sociological, the individual and the social, as they collide and inform one another. In the language of feminist theory, the personal is political, but the

political is also personal, as influence moves in both directions in a simultaneous and continual loop. For these reasons, the Feminist-Humanities model examines the work occurring within and between the individual and the social to make visible the information found where they meet.

On the first day of class, I used an exercise to activate an interrogation of the images of our social imagination and their impact on our thoughts. I called this the stereotyping exercise, although it is important to note that I did not use this descriptor when introducing the exercise in class to keep from influencing student responses. I have since decided that a better descriptor is the automatic social processes exercise, because through this activity students examine how their automatic social processes inform both what they see and how they interpret what they see. Following the activity, I asked students to consider the implications when their automatic processes lead them to miss essential information. From my teacher/researcher journal:

On the first day of class, immediately after confirming that students are in the right classroom, I began class with the stereotyping exercise, immediately after taking roll, as I always do. I paired students with another student in the classroom who they did not know before walking into class today. I try to pair students with someone who's across the room from them, rather than nearby. I also try to pair students who have some obvious dissimilarities, such as: I pair women with men (until I run out of men in the room); I pair white students with students of color (until I run out of students of color in the room); etc. I ask [students] to take out a sheet of paper and, without moving to be near [their assigned partner], without having any conversation with them, describe in detail the person they've been

paired with. I ask them to describe this person, among other characteristics, by writing their: gender, race, ethnic background, social class status, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, college major, hobbies, if they are in a sorority or fraternity, if they are outgoing or introverted, if they have a disability, if they are attractive, and whether or not they feel they would approach this person in a party or club setting.

I made it clear before the exercise began that no one would see what they write, not even me, unless they choose to share it, which I do not recommend. I said that as they were wrapping up, I wanted them to note how they are feeling as they write for this exercise. I then ask [students] to write their thoughts about me so far and how they are feeling about the experience of taking this course. I reiterate that honesty is essential, that it's important for them to write as much detail as possible, as they will not remember a week or two from now what they were thinking today, and that no one will see this but them. I instruct them to fold up and put away the piece of paper once they are finished with their writing.

This was followed by a brief class discussion where students made the following points: how awkward it felt to write these things down, to describe someone based only on how they look. But, as I mention above, one of the students (I believe it may have been Tyler) also said he had the realization that this is something he usually does when meeting someone new, although in an unconscious way…I moved on to the next activity, where I have students move to sit next to their partner and take some time to get to know them. I told students that I don't recommend that they ask about the characteristics they have just

described. Rather, they are to get to know each other as they would normally. I

told students they will be briefly introducing their partner to the class...Students

then introduced their partner to the class. This was a pleasant activity, and

everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. (Instructor, teacher/researcher

journal, January 28, 2015)

This activity is useful at the first class session for a variety of reasons. First, it is more

effective if students do not know each other. Second, it is a useful reference point for a

class centered on an epistemic project; this is demonstrated by how frequently students

referred to this exercise throughout the semester, in their final papers, and again in the

focus group conversations. From their first moments in the classroom, students began

surfacing and interrogating the images in their heads, how they inform their automatic

social processes, and thus, their assumptions and behaviors. This is a useful way to begin

a course that asks students to consider what they think they know about the world, how

they know it, and how what they know informs their social interactions.

Language Analysis: Culture and Language Are Co-constitutive

Since the concept of the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) is abstract, the model

needed a more concrete way to guide students to interrogate the images in their heads. As

Muriel Saville-Troike (2003) says, culture and language are co-constitutive. Thus,

examinations of language are a window into understanding how culture is developed,

transmitted, and maintained or altered. Alessandro Duranti (1997) says, "Language also

provides us with a useful link between inner thought and public behavior" (p. 49), again

underscoring the link between the individual and the social. Because of this link, Maxine

Greene (2009) and Neil Postman (1996) each recommend an explicit examination of

language constructs as a guide as students investigate our social world, how it was built, and opportunities for change. While neither Greene nor Postman speaks directly to these images in our heads, the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) is a useful term for what they are accessing through language analysis.

In his *The Word Weavers/The World Makers* narrative Neil Postman (1996) recommends analyzing language as a tool to critically examine how our world is made and maintained, and the ways altering our language can alter our thinking and remake our world. For this reason, the Feminist-Humanities model guides students to investigate how language determines our values, how it creates barriers to our thoughts and imagination, and how the gatekeepers of language control sociopolitical power,[11] ideas I introduced through Orwell's *Animal Farm* during the third class session. For investigating the link between language and the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007), Postman recommends an explicit examination of *definitions*, *questions*, and *metaphors*, as "these are three of the most potent elements with which human language constructs a worldview" (p. 175). Thus, an investigation of the vocabulary that makes our world provides opportunities for students to interrogate the ways we use words—for example, *diversity*, *gender*, *race,* the *American Dream*, *equity*, *democracy*, and more—, how we define these terms, and how our word choices and their uses organize our social knowledge (Ahmed, 2007).

Postman's (1996) *The Word Weavers/The World Makers* narrative fits well with Sara Ahmed's (2004a) examination of *affective economies*. As Ahmed demonstrates, words *do work* by carrying affect; words create feeling, and these emotions can either link people together in a shared community or create distinctions between groups or

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[11] See also Ahmed, 2004a & 2007; Fricker, 2007; Jaggar, 2013/1989; Noddings, 2007.

individuals. Ahmed is clear that emotions do not reside in the subjects, and they are not

created by these subjects. Rather, emotions move sideways and backward as they

circulate among and through subjects. They move sideways as they circulate "through

'sticky' association between signs, figures, and objects" (p. 120); they move backward as

they invoke past associations and reimagine their historical context. As they circulate,

they build in magnitude. It is precisely their ability to circulate and intensify that makes

emotions effective; this is a crucial point. *Sticky* words can be used to fuse or sever

relations through the affect they carry. Thus, a great deal can be gained from guiding

students through an examination of the *sticky* words (Ahmed, 2004a) of our *social*

imaginations (Fricker, 2007): how they are used and the work they do. Postman says the

awareness gained through language analysis gives students greater control over their

lives; he further asserts that gaining this control should be the main purpose of

education.[12] Through this statement, Postman challenges the neoliberal intent of

education[13] and reimagines its purpose as transformational learning. Rather than focusing

on individual achievement, this shifts students' attention to the social sphere and provides

them with analytic tools that flex their agency for change. In chapters four and five, I

present evidence that students have learned to recognize the work of *sticky* words

(Ahmed, 2004a) in ways that reveal our social structures and their affective impacts.

Postman also (1996) highlights the usefulness of metaphor. He says metaphor

allow us to examine our most basic assumptions.[14] This was made clear when students

discussed *Animal Farm* in class. Orwell's allegorical style and use of animals as

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[12] Although control and freedom are not synonymous, I believe Postman's (1996) concept is similar to
Freire's (1970) position that *education is the practice of freedom*.
[13] As discussed in chapter one.
[14] See also Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) classic text *Metaphors we live by*.

characters allowed students enough distance from their own experience to view the larger landscape of how power operates in a society, how language creates culture, while demonstrating what happens when we do not pay close attention to the gatekeepers of language (Postman, 1996) and their ability to organize and align us in hierarchies of power. As the pigs alter the language of the Seven Commandments, they also remake Animal Farm and its power relations, specifically in ways that benefit them. Lacking the power of language analysis, the other animals either ignore or justify these machinations, allowing the pigs to rule unchallenged.

Maxine Greene (2009) tells us that poets employ metaphor to guide us to break from our routines and examine them in new ways. She says poets use metaphor to create a "passion of possibility" (p. 84), to encourage us to reach beyond what is to what we wish to be by "creat[ing] spaces...[that] call on us to move beyond where we are, to break with submergence, to transform" (p. 86). Thus, metaphor allows us to see anew, making it a useful tool for a teaching and learning model that aims to transform society. As such, metaphor is a powerful device for stepping outside ourselves to question what we take for granted, to shift our perspective, and to imagine alternate ways of thinking and doing. This was my intent when I asked students if *Animal Farm* has a tragic or hopeful ending. Postman says questions are another effective tool to help us see in new ways. My question intended to shift students' attention beyond the events of the book to consider what we can learn from it about the process of change and the necessary components of diverse and equitable societies. During the class discussion, I drew attention to the alterations the pigs make to the Seven Commandments and the *affective economies* carried by these *sticky* words (Ahmed, 2004a) to guide students to consider how language

creates barriers to our thought and action but also how alterations to our social narrative can uncover new ways of thinking and doing. Like definitions and metaphors, questions are an essential ingredient of language of analysis because they encourage us to look again at what we think we know.

The Feminist-Humanities model builds on this introduction to language analysis through its guiding metaphor of *storytelling*. Through the stories we tell, we use language to describe but also to create the world. As such, stories tap into the connection between psychology and sociology, or the individual and social. And storytelling is key to how the curricular model uses the humanities-based ways of knowing to enact the principles of feminist pedagogy in the classroom.

Storytelling

'Nonanalytic' and 'nonrational' forms of discourse, like fiction or poetry, may be better able than other forms to convey the complex life experience of one group to members of another. (Narayan, 2010/1989, p. 337)

Storytelling is a fundamental process of self-creation (Maynes, et al., 2008). It is through telling stories that we assign meaning to our experiences. This makes stories a useful source for interrogating the images in our heads that constitute the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007). As Uma Narayan (2010/1989) suggests in the quotation above, stories told through fiction, poetry, and personal narratives provide a useful pathway to examine the co-constitution of language and life (Saville-Troike, 2003). Or, as Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett (2008) tell us, stories exist at the intersection of the individual and the social, where psychology meets social construction and social discourse (components of the social imagination), providing a

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nuanced view of how we experience and interpret the world. Examining this intersection allow us to view whole persons within deep context and historical positioning. Since this intersection is the heart of the Feminist-Humanities model, storytelling is a useful curricular guide.

The intersection of the individual and the social is where we find what Gordon (1997) calls *complex personhood*, which she describes as "that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life" (p. 8). At this intersection, deeper truths may emerge. And Maynes et al. (2008) tell us what emerges may run counter to what appear to be logical interpretations of social science data based on trends and statistics. Life is messy and nuanced and layered, and the ways we navigate social structures are fraught. This messiness can be missed or misinterpreted in the aggregate. The larger landscape of the data is important, but alone it does not tell the whole story. We must connect the individual and the social to gain knowledge that is more accurate and more complete. As Gordon (1997) says, *life is complicated*. We make decisions that on the surface appear counterintuitive. And reading the stories told by those positioned differently can put flesh to those decisions. What stories offer that is missing from a social science-based diversity textbook is an opportunity to wrestle with this complexity and its emotional truth.

Gordon (1997) builds a sophisticated theory from her seemingly simple statement that *life is complicated*. She refers to her phrase as both *banal* and *profound* and "perhaps the most important theoretical statement of our time" (p. 3). She says it has two dimensions, "The first is that the power relations that characterize any historically embedded society are never as transparently clear as the names we give them imply" (p. 3). She characterizes the complexity of power relations in all their contradictions as

invisible and *obvious*, *fantastic, dull and routine*, *dense* and *superficial*, *systemic* and

particularistic (and "often both at the same time," p. 3), *explicit* and *internalized*. Like

the Feminist-Humanities model, Gordon explores the links between the seemingly

dichotomous to reveal how life occurs in the interstices, where the individual and the

social collide.

Gordon's second dimension, *complex personhood*, captures this collision: the ways

people "remember and forget," "recognize and misrecognize themselves and others," and

how "people suffer graciously and selfishly too, get stuck in the symptoms of their

troubles, and also transform themselves," "people get tired and some are just plain lazy,"

"act together" and "disagree," for people can "haunt" and also "be haunted" (p. 4-5).

Thus, Gordon provides a vocabulary to wrestle with the ways we live between

dichotomies. She says, "Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about

themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society's

problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and

what their imaginations are reaching toward" (p. 4). In a sentence, "complex personhood

is about conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people's

lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning" (p. 5).

Thus, through her statement that *life is complicated* and her description of *complex*

personhood, Gordon highlights the primacy of listening carefully to the stories of others

to build more accurate knowledge.

Gordon (1997) further elucidates the quotation from Narayan that heads this section

saying, "...literature…often teaches us, through imaginative design, what we need to

know but cannot quite get access to..." (p. 25). It is important to note that Gordon (1997)

and Fricker (2007) each use fiction, as well as personal narratives, to illustrate their arguments about injustice and to highlight pathways for change. The burgeoning field of neuroscience offers further evidence for the potency of storytelling, and fiction in particular, for conveying the complexity of life experience. As Keith Oatley (2011) describes, "Scientists use circles to solve problems in physics, and writers and readers likewise use fictional characters to think about people in the social world… Just as computer simulations have helped us understand perception, learning and thinking, stories are simulations of a kind that can help readers understand not just the characters in books but human character in general" (p. 1). Oatley continues, "The process of entering imagined worlds of fiction builds empathy and improves your ability to take another person's point of view" (p. 1). As such, fiction offers a simulation of lived experience and the opportunity to explore its messy complexity. Facts and logic will carry the curriculum only so far if we want students to recognize the richness of human behavior. Oatley says reading fiction allows us to practice empathy. If the Feminist-Humanities model aims to change hearts and minds, it must engage both students' cognitive and emotional capacities, and stories hold the power to bring these capacities together by examining the co-constitution of language and life (Saville-Troike, 2003). It is because of this explanatory power that the model uses fiction, personal narratives, and other accounts to investigate the messy and complicated lives of complex people, the ways social structures and power relations push on them, and how they negotiate these pressures in fraught and sometimes surprising ways.

Postpositivist Realist Theory of Identity

Postpositivist realist theory is another important feminist theory that further

highlights the usefulness of examining stories to build students' capacity for social transformation. Postructural analytic tools have been crucial to the development of critical thought, helping us examine identity and difference, question underlying beliefs, and deconstruct socialization and the discourses that organize it. However, postructuralism has also taken a "sledgehammer" to claims of truth (Weedon, 1987). If there is no truth that can be known outside of discourse, it renders understanding across difference unattainable, making it difficult to develop common ground. Donna Haraway (1988) talks about the necessity of *multivocality*[15] for understanding women's experience, its variation, and its material effects. And *postpositivist realist theory* builds on her foundation, as it seeks to heal the fractures that develop as we grapple with the complexities of identity and difference within coalitions of resistance. Gordon (1997) says, "What some feminists and critical theorists have sensibly insisted on retaining [from poststructuralism] is precisely a double structure of thought that links the epistemological and the social" (p. 11). Linking the epistemological and the social is a core strategy of the Feminist-Humanities model, and the postpositivist realist theory of identity establishes this link in ways that can be activated in the classroom.

The postpositivist realist literature (Macdonald & Sanchez-Casal, 2002; C. T. Mohanty, 2010/2003; S. Mohanty, 1997; Moya, 2010/2001; Moya & Hames-Garcia, 2000) offers a pathway to reengage human agency within coalitions of difference.[16] Paula Moya (2010/2001) says, "The most basic claim of postpositivist realist theory of identity

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[15] The feminist approach demands that I acknowledge how I have centered my course and this dissertation on a work by George Orwell, a well-educated and affluent white man. I argue there is great value in continuing to include this reading, in particular, because *Animal Farm* can be viewed as a multivocal text.
[16] As such, it responds to Smith's (1996) challenge to reconnect academic discourses to lived experience, as discussed in chapter one.

is that identities are both constructed and real" (p. 472). As we build knowledge, we must recognize these simultaneous, seemingly contradictory truths. In response, the Feminist-Humanities model first surfaces students' individual pre-course knowledge through their first assignment—the *Who Am I?* Part I paper—, then in their final paper asks students to interrogate the assumptions of their pre-course knowledge based on what they have learned from course materials that center lives of the marginalized. Because all views are partial (Haraway, 1988), it is through this expansive, multivocal process, within a "hydra of contending groups" (Smith, 1996, p. 49) that students develop more accurate knowledge. Postpositivist realist theory connects the *systemic* and the *particularistic* and allows us to recognize how they occur simultaneously as they interact and inform each other (Gordon, 1997). For this reason, the Feminist-Humanities model uses postpositivist realist theory to guide rich and nuanced examinations of individual stories to reveal what they tell us about our social world.

To activate postpositivist realist theory in the classroom, in the second class meeting, I introduced a camera lens metaphor as a descriptor for how we view the world. I told students the goal of the course is to pull back the camera lens for a larger view, to make visible what has been going on just outside their field of vision so they can interrogate the ways this new information may challenge their assumptions. I pointed out that from this more expansive perspective we can identify our larger social patterns and examine who benefits and who suffers from them. A humanities education guides students toward a greater understanding of themselves and the world. And the Feminist-Humanities model uses postpositivist realism to build on this foundation and further illuminate the complex ways identities are socially constructed but also have very real

impacts in individual lives. Exploring these seemingly dichotomous concepts releases

knowledge that can challenge neoliberal discourses. These intersections are dangerous

because the location where opposites meet holds explanatory power that demands

change.[17] Interrogating these intersections opens up a precarious but creative space: an

opportunity to *imagine otherwise* (Gordon, 1997), to conceive of different futures. And

the camera lens metaphor makes tangible for students the duality of postpositivist

realism. As I demonstrate in chapter four, several students take up the camera lens

metaphor in their final papers to describe how their course learning has expanded and

corrected their social knowledge.

II.   How do we teach and why?

Feminist Pedagogy: Interrogating Knowledge

Feminist pedagogy is a critical and ethical epistemic stance with the explicit goal of

teaching for social transformation. It brings feminist theory into classroom practice

through teaching strategies that 1) value personal experience and 2) illuminate power

relations toward its overarching goal of 3) modeling social change (Crabtree, et al.,

2009).[18] These three principles are also the backbone for how the Feminist-Humanities

model guides students to interrogate knowledge, continually shifting their attention to

make visible information that challenges their assumptions about themselves, others, and

the social world. In this section, I describe how the model uses the humanities ways of

knowing—specifically storytelling and reflexive writing—to enact these principles in the

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[17] Jaggar's (2013/1989) *outlaw emotions*; Gordon's (1997) *somethings-to-be-done*.
[18] As they appear in this dissertation, these three principles are my summary of the characteristics of feminist pedagogy presented by Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona (2009) in their review of the literature of the field. See p. 4.

classroom.

In the spirit of backward design—beginning with the end in mind—I begin with the third principle, modeling social change, because it is the overarching aim of both feminist pedagogy and the Feminist-Humanities model. Then, I describe how the model enacts the second principle—illuminating relations of power—through counterstories in course materials to connect individual life experiences to the larger social landscape. Finally, I describe how the model values personal experience through both the stories students tell about their lives and through the counterknowledge made available by *decentering the center* (Maher & Tetreault, 2001). This reverse order roughly mirrors the sequence through which the Feminist-Humanities model introduces these concepts in the classroom.

1. *Modeling social change*

We will have to teach our new students and ourselves how to think, not just how to 'master' what has already been prepared...Our teaching will demand independence and strength and rebelliousness as necessarily as the old teaching demanded acceptance and submission...At least part of the impulse behind teaching will have to change from the drive to exercise authority—to profess what one knows—to the desire to learn together. Like most revolutionary goals, that, too, is an old and a dangerous one. (Minnich, 1983, p. 325)

As the quotation above from Elizabeth Minnich (1983) makes clear, subversion is elemental to feminist pedagogy,[19] which also presents a challenge to its wide acceptance in the academy. Those who teach from this critical stance aim to transform both the

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[19] See also Pateman (2013/1986) for a discussion of the *The theoretical subversiveness of feminism.*

academy and society. Feminist pedagogy strives to model change by "transform[ing] thought into action" (Crabtree, et al., 2009, p. 4). And everything instructors do in the classroom either demonstrates or contradicts this intention. Thus, teaching matters, and it is crucial that theory and praxis are closely aligned. Through feminist pedagogy, teaching becomes much more, in both method and intent, than a mode of information delivery.[20] As Margo Culley and Catherine Portuges (2013/1985) describe it, within feminist pedagogy teaching becomes a project of "complex intellectual and emotional engagement" between instructor and students (p. 4). Learning through relationships makes learning more personal, purposeful, and relevant to our lives. This contrasts with traditional approaches to teaching that view knowledge and lived experience as separate.

The Feminist-Humanities model also works to bring students into a relationship of "complex intellectual and emotional engagement" (Culley & Portuges, 2013/1985, p. 4) with the course material, to get them involved as they work to better understand the lives of others. As Dorothy Smith (1996) and Avery Gordon (1997) make clear, if we wish to develop knowledge that can spur positive social change, it must be rooted in an authentic understanding of the ways our assumptions and actions create and maintain hegemonic inequities. As the classroom is transformed through feminist pedagogy, it also transforms what students see as possible. This revisioning (Rich, 1979/1971) of ourselves as teachers helps us guide students to reimagine their relationship to the world and their potential for altering it. If true change is what we seek, instructors must break from pedagogical neutrality and become involved, just as we aim to get students involved. One way I enact

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[20] This is Freire's (1970) argument in his critique of the "banking model" of education, a critique expanded within feminist pedagogy.

this in the classroom is by talking about my own journey toward political consciousness

and the never-finished nature of this work. I describe specific, revelatory moments that

have shifted and deepened how I understand my social position, how it interacts with

institutional structures, and my responsibility to act for change. In doing so, I make the

change process an explicit course element. I also describe my ongoing struggles within

this process.

As bell hooks (1994) says, teaching for transformation is not safe. Feminist teachers

challenge hegemonic systems while also making themselves vulnerable within the

reflexive process. And we surface tensions in the classroom, then teach into them. This

can initially make things worse because we are stirring up what appears settled; we are

challenging canonical knowledge. However, the tainted images of our social imagination

must be excavated and interrogated before we can build more accurate knowledge.

Negotiating this process in the classroom demands a deftness beyond the scope of

traditional information delivery. Revealing ourselves as human divests us of power, but it

also allows us to present to students a new model of teaching and learning, community,

and coalition building. Likewise, it demands more of the student, who no longer

passively takes in knowledge but becomes an active subject in their learning and the

learning of their classroom community. For Margo Culley, Arlyn Diamond, Lee

Edwards, Sara Lennox, and Catherine Portuges (2013/1985/1979), "The feminist

classroom is thus transformed into a privileged space, the *locus desperatus* of reenacting,

and perhaps examining for the first time, both threatening and joyous psychic events at a

telling moment in the students' developmental life. We can begin to learn how to gather

this material into new wholes, but only if we drop the masks of our own non-

involvement" (p. 17, emphasis in original). This demands active engagement with each other, with knowledge, and with the sociopolitical world. Active, relational, emotional engagement models social change by demonstrating for students the ongoing, messy, challenging, but productive work of an authentic learning community that builds coalition through careful listening, acknowledging tensions that arise, and responding to tensions directly.

There are a variety of ways the Feminist-Humanities model demonstrates social change in the classroom. For example, an interrogation of the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) through the automatic social processes exercise during the first class session plunges students into the epistemic project by asking them to explore how their assumptions inform their perceptions of others, and how these perceptions inform their social interactions. I balance this tension through community-building exercises throughout the semester, but especially in the first few class sessions, developing a variety of opportunities for students to work directly with their classmates and through other activities that help us get to know each other in fun and lively ways that also serve the curricular aims. Fisher (2001) says this is another useful feature of *shifts in attention*. She writes about the importance of *varying the gaze*, specifically in a feminist pedagogical practice where the interrogation of oppression is central to the curriculum and creates a tension in the classroom that makes all participants feel vulnerable. Fisher (2001) says:

> Attention retains its vibrancy when it has the chance to vary. Thus, while insisting on the centrality of oppression to feminist discourse, my teaching may also direct attention away from immediate discomfort or pain and toward reflection on it, or

away from guilt over other people's suffering to consider some of the very

practical reforms that others have been able to effect. These shifts stimulate rather

than deaden desire, by suggesting that political discourse can both speak to the

hurts that stem from injustice and provide concrete visions of possible change. (p.

34)

This tension and release is a useful teaching tool, while also demonstrating care for

students and modeling a constructive process for coalition building. Additionally, the

evidence presented in this dissertation suggests the variety of course materials, varying of

tension and release, and varying or shifting of perspectives each work to gain and keep

students' attention, while they are asked to look again and again from a variety of

perspectives using a variety of analytic tools.

Other aspects of relationship building within my feminist pedagogical practice are

to ask students to call me by my first name, quickly learn and use students' names, and

ask students to call each other by name during class discussions. These actions may

appear small, but they also ask us to pay attention to each other and each other's

humanity. Through detailed feedback on assignments, I acknowledge students' efforts to

wrestle with complex concepts, while I also challenge them to go ever deeper in their

reflexive interrogations. This requires careful attention to the needs of each student, and

careful calibration between encouragement and challenge. This is time-consuming work,

but it also demonstrates the attention and care the model asks students to apply to both

their classmates and the storytellers in course materials. As I describe in chapter five,

during the focus group conversations students spoke about several of these elements of

my feminist pedagogical practice and how they made them feel seen and supported and

encouraged their learning.

2. *Illuminating Relations of Power*

As Ahmed (2007) makes clear, a focus on *diversity* rather than *social justice* can do more to reaffirm hegemonic power structures than to challenge them.[21] The goal of the Feminist-Humanities model is not for students to leave the course thinking only that they have been on a journey of personal growth that felt good and made them more accepting and open. This cannot be the endpoint for a course that aims to build students' capacity for transformative change. Rather, students need to feel the discomfort of injustice, the *hauntings* (Gordon, 1997) that demand they take their new knowledge into the world and act on it. It is by illuminating relations of power that the model guides students to interrogate the discomfort of injustice. A focus on power relations is a hallmark of feminist theory and feminist pedagogy[22] and a cornerstone for how the Feminist-Humanities model breaks from more traditional diversity courses, where examinations of power are rare, or from my observation, largely absent. And a focus on power is key to the way the Feminist-Humanities model *decenters the center* (Maher & Tetreault, 2001) and uses multivocal counterstories to contest received knowledge.[23]

Fricker (2007) says that while injustice is the norm, her field of philosophy centers around ideas of justice.[24] She says, "I think there is a lot to be gained philosophically by concentrating on the normality of injustice, and one of the gains might be that we achieve a better grasp of what is required in practice to operate in a way that works against it." (p. 7). While *for-ness* and hope (Ahmed, 2004b) are essential ingredients of change, we must

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[21] See chapter one for greater detail on Ahmed's (2007) critique.
[22] See Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona (2009) & Fisher (2001).
[23] See also Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Turule (1986).
[24] Fricker references Judith Shklar's (1990) *The faces of injustice*.

first see clearly how injustice operates before we can correct it. As Gordon (1997) describes, an examination of the normality and mechanisms of injustice can offer students a realistic portrait of where we live, which is necessary before we can consider where we want to live. Similarly, Fricker (2007) says, "There is a limit, of course, to what virtues on the part of individuals can achieve when the root cause of epistemic injustice is structures of unequal power and the systemic prejudices they generate" (p. 7-8). Through counterstories the Feminist-Humanities model illuminates power relations and the injustices they create and maintain. This shifts students into a critically reflective mode of thinking (Fricker, 2007) that allows them to ask what would need to be different to create more equitable communities.

Critical thinking is a *sticky* (Ahmed, 2004a) and ubiquitous phrase in education. Thus, before we can consider how best to guide students into critically reflective mode (Fricker, 2007), it is first necessary to look more closely at how we define and use this concept. Nel Noddings (2007) finds the concept ill-defined and its purpose vague. She asks: *What is the purpose of critical thinking?* (p. 85+) and *Why do we want students to become critical thinkers*? (p. 100+). She considers the idea of determining the best argument abstracted from lived experience to be "rudderless" (p. 102). She quotes Jane Roland Martin (2000), who says, "Too often…critical thinkers become spectators rather than participants" (as cited in Noddings, 2007, pp. 100-101).[25] Noddings distinguishes between *truth* and *validity*, stating that valid reasoning can lead to invalid conclusions. She posits the purpose of critical thinking as "not only or always to produce the best argument but to connect with others in a way that would make the world demonstrably

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[25] Offering further support for Smith's (1996) discussion presented in chapter one.

better—less violent, less cruel, and less insensitive to the pain around us" (p. 102). But she goes further saying:

> Our aim is not just to present arguments and help students to select the best. Rather, our aim is to help students to understand that flesh-and-blood human beings hold these views—some of which are repulsive—and to give them a sense of both the possibility and tragedy of human encounters. Through critical thinking aimed at human connection, we hope to make it unthinkable for educated human beings to destroy one another or treat one another cruelly in the name of some great principle. Note, however, that even this should be open to discussion. (Noddings, 2007, p. 104)

Thus, Noddings calls on educators to abandon the illusion of pedagogical neutrality[26] and use an explicitly moral anchor for critical inquiry.[27] Noddings says to forge human connection, we must examine the products of critical thought, how they are used in our social structures, and their real world impacts. Joy James (1998/1991) also makes it clear that the cornerstone of a social justice course is the rejection of the claim that education is value neutral. James says, "Teaching critical theory that analyzes the interrelatedness of oppression and liberation is a political and subversive act" (p. 84) because the goal is collective and systemic change. And as Gordon (1997) says, if we follow *hauntings*, "...the result will not be a more tidy world, but one that might be less damaging" (p. 19). This demands that we reconsider our relationship to others and how we impact each other. Noddings speaks of the "great sadness for Paulo Freire and others working to

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[26] Noddings (2007) says "Pedagogical neutrality is not the same as moral or intellectual neutrality" (p. 105).
[27] See also Fricker (2007), Gordon (1997), Greene (2009), & Postman (1996), who each employ an explicit moral anchor in their language analyses.

overcome oppression [when] the newly liberated turn right around and behave like the oppressors" (p. 102). Noddings suggests critical inquiry with a moral anchor can prevent this outcome. Like Noddings and James (1998/1991), Alison Jaggar (2013/1989) also states that feminist theory takes a critical view of the positivist claim of value-free knowledge. As such, feminist pedagogy makes a centerpiece of its values. However, as Noddings cautions in the second part of the quotation above, the process and products of critical thought must be continually interrogated, and never seen as final, unassailable truth. Fisher (2001) agrees saying, "any claim to a universal set of thinking rules is suspect" (p. 52). The continual, reciprocal interrogation of our assumptions and how they inform our interactions is what keeps us from going too far down the wrong path, or allows us to course correct when we do.[28]

As these scholars each make clear, analyses of structure and power are crucial for transforming a diversity curriculum into a curriculum for social justice education. The Feminist-Humanities model aims to build human connection through interrogating how our knowledge informs the norms, practices, policies, and laws that directly and indirectly impact our lives, and by exploring how these impacts are felt differently by individuals and groups depending on their social identities. This examination allows students to feel injustice. Rather than simply appreciating diversity, critical inquiry with a moral anchor demands change. For example, I used Orwell's *Animal Farm* to explore how their assumption of superiority leads the pigs to change the rules of Animal Farm in ways that benefit only them; as such, they take on the guise of the oppressor, which is made literal in the final scene of the book. Under the leadership of Napoleon and the

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[28] See also Anzaldúa (2013/1992).

other pigs, the conditions of the other animals on the farm worsen rather than improve after the Rebellion. As I describe at the beginning of chapter one, the pigs morph from fellow animals to oppressors in this final scene, and the other animals can no longer distinguish them from the humans. In the class session that followed our discussion of *Animal Farm*, I used a learning simulation called *StarPower* to continue our examination of social structures and their power relations. As I demonstrate in chapters four and five, students had a profound reaction to playing *StarPower*, and several student-participants point to it as a pivotal moment in the course. One student-participant, Aisha, describes the game experience in terms that indicate a class-wide *shift in attention* (Fisher, 2001) through which students learned the importance of analyzing structure for a more complete understanding of how our society operates and what we would need to do differently to achieve different outcomes. Based on Aisha's description, affective knowledge was crucial to creating this shift. Depending on their in-game group membership, students described feeling either defeated by a game they knew they could not win or heady with power in a game they controlled. Playing *StarPower* (Shirts, 1969)[29] left an indelible impression on a large number of student-participants.

The significance of playing *StarPower* for the student-participants in this investigation underscores the potency of pairing experiential learning and feminist teaching. As Fricker (2007) says, "Anything that we have to learn to do we learn by the

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[29] Shirts (1969). "*StarPower* is a real time, face to face, non-computer based simulation game of an organization or system in which leaders are given unlimited powers to make and change the rules of the simulation. Participants have a chance to progress from one level of society to another by acquiring wealth through trading with other participants. Once the society is established, the group with the most wealth is given the right to make the rules for the game. The power group generally makes rules which maintain or increase its power and which those being governed consider to be unfair. This generally results in some sort of rebellion by the other members of the society." See reference list for link to online information about the simulation.

actual doing of it: people become builders by building and instrumentalists by playing

instruments. Similarly we become just by performing just acts…" (p. 81). And my

analysis suggests the surfacing of affect through games and activities like *StarPower* is

key to their impact. As I discuss in depth in chapter five, when students feel injustice it

links the individual and the social and creates useful opportunities to interrogate injustice

and practice justice in the classroom.

For Gordon (1997) affect is important to examinations of power because to

understand power requires new ways of knowing. She says, "To study social life one

must confront the ghostly aspects of it. This confrontation requires (or produces) a

fundamental change in the way we know and make knowledge, in our mode of

production" (p. 7). She says further:

> If haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething
>
> presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost
>
> is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is
>
> taking place…and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and
>
> subjectivity make social life…Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes
>
> against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling[30] of a
>
> reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative
>
> recognition. (Gordon, 1997, p. 8)

Gordon (1997) says hauntings hold transformative potential because they are "dense

sites" that contain knowledge of the "relationship among power, knowledge, and

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[30] Gordon (1997) is using Raymond Williams' (1977) term *structure of feeling*, which she describes as "perhaps the most appropriate description of how hauntings are transmitted and received" (p. 18).

experience" (p. 23). To forge human connection, the Feminist-Humanities model must make visible what has been rendered invisible, or *unvisible* (Gordon, 1997), by relations of power. As Gordon describes, hauntings can often be felt but not seen. Affect alerts us to something we have missed; as such, it is essential information for investigating issues of justice. Thus, to fully illuminate relations of power, it is necessary to take account of emotions and the knowledge they contain.

Affect Theory

An emotional response should be part of the curriculum. (Simmons, 2016)

The Feminist-Humanities model uses stories to expand students' social knowledge because story archives feeling, and story's ability to surface affect is key to its transformative power, or what Gordon (1997) calls *transformative recognition*. When we connect with the stories of others, we feel what they feel, and feeling injustice allows us to practice empathy. Like postpositivist realism, affect theory was developed as a way to reengage the sense of political agency lost through poststructural understandings of identity and difference. And when activated together, postpositivist realist theory and affect theory allow us to correct our knowledge through an expanded social view. Ahmed (2004b) says, "If pain does move subjects into feminism, then it does so precisely by *reading* the relation between affect and structure, or between emotion and politics in a way that undoes the separation of the individual from others" (p. 174, emphasis in original). Gordon (1997) says affect is "how hauntings are transmitted and received" (p. 18); thus, affective analysis allows us to follow "the insights that come to those who see all these forces operating at once" (Gordon, 1997, p. 19). This holds transformative power, making affective analysis an indispensable component of the Feminist-

Humanities model.

The *affective turn* (Clough, 2007) developed in the humanities and the social sciences at the beginning of the new millennium. Like postpositivist realism, it seeks a solution to the poststructural dilemma, a way to heal the fractures and loss of agency that develop as we grapple with the complexities of identity and difference. By examining how discourses are embodied, the affective turn interrogates how lived experience impacts us at the body level. Texts—the spoken and written products of our discourse— archive felt experiences, and the affective turn examines the ways texts activate these feelings in readers. Thus, reading is a felt experience. Affect theory investigates how feelings develop from texts, how emotions are created, how appropriate emotions are socially defined and perpetuated, and how inappropriate emotions are punished.[31]

Affect theory seeks to break down the binary of knowledge/emotion to illuminate the ways emotions are understood as unreasonable and in need of control. Alison Jaggar (2013/1989) demonstrates how knowledge and emotion are inextricably linked, and specifically how emotions are integral to knowledge building. She describes how knowledge and emotion have been severed in modern times to serve the purpose of the group in power. She says white men define themselves as rational creatures and all others, especially people of color and women, as creatures at the mercy of their emotions. Thus, emotional hegemony creates a hierarchy through the unequal distribution of thought and emotion across race and gender. Through this process, white men reserve for themselves a position of objective rational thought. From this perspective, white men are

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[31] Ahmed's (2007) work on diversity talk is an exemplar for how to use affect as a tool of analysis. She describes the ways diversity talk makes the privileged feel good and inclusive while leaving the oppressed feeling frustrated or angry because the material impacts of subjugation remain unchallenged. See chapter one for a more in depth discussion.

viewed as superior in thought and reason, and the knowledge claims of subordinate groups are easily discounted as unreasonable.

To counter this binary, Jaggar (2013/1989) argues that emotions are "ways in which we engage actively and even construct the world" (p. 847). She dispels the myth of the dispassionate investigator saying, "emotions presuppose values" (p. 848). She describes how the splitting of knowledge and emotion keeps us unaware of the ways emotions construct our thinking, and in particular how socially acceptable emotions prefigure our values. Thus, what is chosen as valuable for investigation, how the investigation is conducted, and how observed phenomena are interpreted are each filtered implicitly through shared values and their emotional stickiness (Ahmed, 2004a). Thus, positivist investigation is infused at every level with emotions that prefigure research efforts. Like James (1998/1991) and Noddings (2007), Jaggar rejects the positivist claim that there can be value-free knowledge. Because of the level at which these connections are made, and due to our lack of awareness of our emotional responses, Jaggar says it is only in retrospect that we can see how our values have guided our thought processes and limited what we observe and how we act. Further, she says the sexism, racism, homophobia, class inequity, and other oppressions pervasive in our society each shape what we consider scientifically valuable and worthy of observation. In the language of Fricker (2007), the social imagination holds great sway over our thoughts and actions and in ways we do not consciously recognize.

Fricker (2007) also explores the dichotomy of cognition and emotion. She says:

If one comes to the issue with the empiricist *idée fixe* that there is cognition on the one hand and emotion on the other, where the former has intentional content and

the latter does not, then it will be terminally puzzling to suggest that a cognitive

state, such as a perception, could motivate an action. If, however, one comes to

the issue with a conception of emotion as capable of cognitive content, and/or a

conception of cognition as permitting emotional content, then the question of

motivation does not present itself as a problem. (p. 78, emphasis in original)

Here Fricker places emotion and reason on an equal and deeply linked footing within the

knowledge building process. She says further, "Empathy, I take it, is an emotional

cognitive capacity" (p. 80) where "...virtuous moral perceptions and virtuous testimonial

perceptions both feature emotion as a positive cognitive input" (p. 80). Thus, it is

necessary to recognize the connection between emotion and cognition before we can

identify the prejudices of our social imagination and how they impact who we value as

holders of knowledge. Importantly for the Feminist-Humanities model, as described

above in the discussion of the *StarPower* game, Fricker says we acquire virtues through

practicing them. In Fricker's terminology, through practicing just acts, students can learn

to correct the *testimonial injustice* that causes them to discount someone as a *knower*

based on *identity prejudice*. [32] Feminist teaching models justice and gives students

opportunities to practice justice in the classroom.

Jaggar (2013/1989) also discusses the felt experience of injustice through her

concept of *outlaw emotions*, or emotions that run counter to what is deemed socially

acceptable. She says outlaw emotions alert us when something is wrong. For example, a

man tells a sexist joke. The social expectation is that the listener laughs, accepting the

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[32] *Testimonial injustice* is the central case in Fricker (2007). It occurs when someone discounts another's knowledge because of the *knower's* social identity. Fricker examines the operations of *identity power* and the ways *identity prejudice* is created through its hierarchical structure.

joke. However, a woman hearing it may feel angry or frustrated or even afraid. These outlaw emotions alert the hearer to the disconnect between how she is expected to feel and how she truly feels.[33] For Jaggar, because the split between knowledge and emotion runs deep in our socialization, knowledge from emotion is not automatic; rather, it takes intention and practice before we can recognize the information available through emotion.[34] As we struggle to build our awareness of *outlaw emotions*, we can learn to recognize their analytic power. Jaggar says resistance is possible if we pay attention to them: outlaw emotions become transformative when we learn to surface and interrogate them to better understand our cultural values and their attendant power relations, which are often hidden beneath claims of neutrality. This is related to the *transformative recognition* we can achieve when *hauntings* draw us affectively (Gordon, 1997). Indeed, Jaggar's *outlaw emotions* and Gordon's *hauntings* share similar characteristics.

Since we are taught to discount our emotions, the Feminist-Humanities model asks students to practice recognizing them. It brings affective analysis and the insights it offers into the classroom by asking students to pay attention to affect as a foundational course element. For example, I asked students to pause at the end of class discussions to consider and record their emotions. I also instructed students to record the emotions they observed in the on-screen participants of videos we watched in class. This allowed students to consider the part emotions play in social interactions. And in class discussions following the videos, we used students' observed emotions to interrogate the ways identity impacted these interactions. Further, I asked students to consider and describe

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[33] This is similar to Ahmed's (2007) examination of the ways diversity talk supports hegemonic racist power structures.
[34] See also Ahmed (2004b); Hartsock (1984); Jaggar (2013/1989); & Narayan (2010/1989).

why they felt as they did in these moments. This proved more challenging, especially early in the semester. As Jaggar makes clear, the social construction of reason and emotion as opposites runs deep; therefore, it makes sense that students may struggle to surface their emotional responses, recognize them on a conscious level, and engage their analytic heft. Early in the semester, when I paused for students to record emotions, I received a lot of blank stares and even one male student-participant who talked with me after class because he was confused by the idea that he could have an emotional response to our class discussion. I learned to wait patiently to give students time to think, write, and practice recognizing their emotions. In the beginning this was awkward, but over time students sharpened their skills and became more comfortable with this process, more aware of their feelings, and more adept at reading the feelings of others in course materials and in their classmates. By the end of the semester, this was an aspect of the course several student-participants—all women—pointed to as being the most useful. But there is also evidence that a focus on emotions had an impact on the men in the class, although their responses manifested differently. I discuss these responses in detail in chapter five.

The time and space to reflect on, capture, and—when ready—interrogate emotional reactions to and within course materials allowed at least some of the women student-participants to push past their walls of resistance to achieve a surprising depth of learning. This was especially true for the women of color, as I discuss in chapter five. Considering emotions also made students generally more observant of themselves and each other. Students learned to see, as Ahmed (2004b), Fricker (2007), Gordon (1997), and Jaggar (2013/1989) each describe, that emotions point us toward justice because they

show us what feels right and what feels wrong. For several student-participants, again mostly the women of color, this newly reflexive mindset provided a richer analysis when exploring topics they had previously considered taboo. For them, affect and learning from it through the reflexive writing process became a revelatory pathway for identifying and interrogating injustice and inequity. For this reason, surfacing and analyzing affect proved to be an indispensable element of the Feminist-Humanities model. Michael Hardt (2007), writing about Baruch Spinoza's profound impact on affect theory says, "Spinoza…proposes a correspondence between the power to act and the power to be affected" (Forward, p. x). This suggests that affective analysis is a crucial tool for building students' capacity for change. The student evidence presented in chapter five corroborates this observation.

Ahmed (2004b) offers a compelling explanation for the value of surfacing and analyzing affect when she says, "…knowledge is bound up with what makes us sweat, shudder, tremble, all those feelings that are crucially felt on the bodily surface, the skin surface where we touch and are touched by the world" (p. 171). Further, she suggests this learning (in its feminist definition) "involves an emotional response to 'the world', [35] where the form of that response involves a reorientation of one's bodily relation to social norms" (p. 170-171). In other words, accessing emotions felt and observed during social interactions and classroom discussions about social inequities can allow students to step back from our social norms to examine them in new ways, to explicate the complexity and nuance of our social interactions, how they affect us, and importantly why they affect

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[35] See also Simmons (2016).

us this way.[36] Thus, affect links the individual and the social. Crucially, affective analysis allows instructors to teach into the discomfort students—and instructors—experience in classroom discussions about the injustices that inhere from our sociopolitical hierarchies. This offers a pathway for students to interrogate their feelings within a safe and constructive space. Indeed, I contend that this space is precarious but also creative in that it cracks open new possibilities: for doing things differently, for remaking our world.

Ahmed (2004b) describes this moment as *wonder*. She says the significance of *wonder* is the way an awareness of emotions and their analytic heft can bring us into a new relationship with an object as if we are seeing it for the first time. This is a central aim of the Feminist-Humanities model and its epistemic project, and one that begins with shifting attention (Fisher, 2001) in ways that challenge our assumptions and make visible what has been hidden from view. A sense of wonder "expands our field of vision and touch" (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 179), an idea I introduced to students through the camera lens metaphor. Ahmed goes further saying, "Wonder is about learning to see the world as something that does not have to be, and as something that came to be, over time, and with work. As such, wonder involves learning" (p. 180). Ahmed describes wonder in bodily terms, "The body opens as the world opens up before it" (p. 180). Wonder shows us that "what we feel is wrong, is not necessary, and can be unmade as well as made. Wonder energises the hope of transformation, and the will for politics" (p. 181). As such, Ahmed's concept of *wonder* shares features with both Fisher's (2001) concept of *desire* for change and Gordon's (1997) concept of *transformative recognition.* Each author

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[36] Gordon (1997) refers to this as *density*.

describes the importance of surprise and the transformative potential within this moment of insight.

Importantly, as both Ahmed (2004b) and Fisher (2001) tell us, both *wonder* and *desire* are achieved through learning together. Ahmed says, "I want to suggest that feminist pedagogy can be thought of in terms of the affective opening up of the world through the act of wonder, not as a private act, but as an opening up of what is possible through working together" (p. 181). This is the strength of the comfort-discomfort tension in the collective classroom space. Tension energizes, and this energy passes around, through, and among those in the classroom.[37] And the instructor's careful navigation of this tension can *move* (Ahmed, 2004b) students in ways not possible outside a classroom or other collective setting. This discomfort, this newness, shifts students' attention (Fisher, 2001) to what has been hidden, encouraging them to think in new ways about what could be different. Thus, we are modeling social change, as this energy points toward collective action. As Ahmed makes clear, "emotions are crucial to feminist pedagogy" (p. 181) as they "open up lines of communication" (p. 182), an essential element of coalition building and collective efforts for change. However, she cautions that although emotions are crucial to learning, they are not a final destination. Rather, the process of *wonder* offers new opportunities to examine more deeply what is, how it came to be, and alternatives for how it may be made anew. Students must take up these opportunities. But to act, students must first develop the desire and the capacity for change.

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[37] See also Ahmed's (2004a) discussion of *affective economies*.

Based on the evidence I present in chapter five, affective analysis holds

significant potential to develop students' desire and capacity for change, and for several

reasons. First, affective analysis links the three principles of feminist pedagogy: affective

analysis values personal experience, interrogates relations of power, and models change

by pointing us toward justice. I trace these connections in the section that follows.

Second, affective analysis is not about affect alone; rather, as an analytic tool it brings

together affect and cognition—taking account of both sources of information and within

the analytic process—toward a richer, more comprehensive understanding of phenomena.

Affective analysis not only follows the *hauntings* (Gordon, 1997) but works to

understand what they are trying to tell us.

The potency of affective analysis led to the greatest insights of this dissertation

and appears to be one of the *stickier* (Ahmed, 2004a) components of the Feminist-

Humanities model. I suggest this is because affective analysis ties together the

components of the model in ways that feel real to students, in ways that have explanatory

power. This was most apparent in the writing of the student-participants who are women,

and especially women of color. They were more likely to take up affective analysis to

describe their learning in their final papers. However, as I discuss in detail in chapter five,

there is evidence that the affective component of the model also *pressed* (Ahmed, 2004b)

on other student-participants, just in ways that were less immediately clear. It took time

and repeated close reading of student papers to recognize similar language patterns across

papers. I also had to complete my transformation from teacher to researcher before I

could recognize the affective clues hidden beneath what at first appeared to be weak

student papers. To achieve these revelations, I employed the analytic tools of the

Feminist-Humanities model to: expand my camera lens and look beyond individual student work to recognize language patterns across student papers; to see anew and from differing perspectives; and to identify the affective clues that allowed me to recognize more of what was happening beneath the surface of students' word choices. This was a challenging evolution, both because I have taught this course for many years and because I was new to research. As a researcher, the same skills taught through the Feminist-Humanities model became crucial to my transformational learning.

The potency of affective analysis was more of a surprise than perhaps it should have been, considering each of the scholars who have most deeply informed the development of the Feminist-Humanities model forge a deep link between affect and cognition and call on us to take account of both to develop more accurate social knowledge.[38] Affective analysis is at the heart of the feminist pedagogical stance of teaching and learning. Feminist pedagogy is founded on relational learning and emotional engagement, between students and instructors, and with course material. It creates involvement, thus preparing students to act. As such, taking account of affective knowledge is crucial to feminist pedagogy and the Feminist-Humanities model.

As I discuss in chapter five, in the focus group on the final day of class, student-participants offered strong evidence for the impact of both story and affect on their learning. As feminist theory tells us, the personal is political, and the political is felt at a personal and embodied level. The impact of politics is experienced in deeply personal ways, through both the *mundane* and the *fantastic* (Gordon, 1997), in our daily lives. This describes the power of surfacing affect in the classroom and teaching students to use it as

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[38] Ahmed (2004a); Ahmed (2004b); Fisher (2001); Fricker (2007); Gordon (1997); & Jaggar (2013/1989).

an analytic tool. If students can feel oppression and better understand how it impacts

daily lives and informs individual choice, then perhaps they can develop a *desire* to act

for change (Fisher, 2001).

3. *Valuing Personal Experience*

The theoretical threads of the Feminist-Humanities model come together in the

classroom through the third principle of feminist pedagogy (Crabtree, et al., 2009):

valuing personal experience. The model values the personal experience of the student

learner and the storytellers presented through the course materials, and puts them in

conversation with each other. In the first section of the curricular model, students surface

their pre-course knowledge about who they are, then begin complicating this knowledge

through pedagogical shifts in attention (Fisher, 2001), such as through the automatic

social processes exercise and the camera lens metaphor. Students are introduced in turn to

the analytic tools of knowledge, structure, power, affect, identity, and intersectionality

through class readings, videos, and activities. Then the curriculum brings each of its

components to bear as students apply these analytic tools through careful listening to the

stories of those on our social margins to reveal what they can tell us about the lives of

those positioned differently; this challenges students' assumptions about the operations of

our social world.[39]

I used a variety of course materials to examine lived experience. Students read

Night, Elie Wiesel's powerful personal narrative of his experiences in German

concentration camps near the end of World War II. As with *Animal Farm*, I intentionally

include *Night* because so many students have read it in high school. I find using texts

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[39] See Appendix D for course syllabus.

students are familiar with and asking them to read them again and examine them from new perspectives underscores the larger epistemic theme of the course: to look more closely at what you think you know. Unfortunately, we lost three weeks of classes because of snow; therefore, our discussion of *Night* did not receive as much class time as I had intended. I regret this missed opportunity. As I have observed in previous semesters, *Night* offers an excellent opportunity to apply the tools of structural, power, identity, and affective analysis in ways that resonate with students. The book presents Wiesel's story in his own words, and Wiesel's spare and direct language is deeply affecting. Because of the necessary changes to the class schedule, the majority of course materials I used in this section of the curriculum are videos, news stories, and short theory pieces about the lived aspects of our structures of gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and social class. These materials worked well, and students described many of them in their final papers and during the focus group conversations as significant learning moments. However, this strategy did not fully embrace the primacy of storytelling in the Feminist-Humanities model, especially the importance of listening to people tell their stories in their own words.

As an example, I used a news story (Swarns, 2014) about Maria Fernandez, a Latina woman who died while napping in her car between jobs. Although it was not Fernandez's own account of her life, as I will demonstrate in the analytic chapters that follow this reading deeply affected several student-participants through its counterstory of the working poor and a flesh-and-blood example of the challenges one woman faced in her economic struggle. Counterstories are an important strategy in feminist

consciousness-raising,[40] as they push against mainstream, neoliberal characterizations

and connect individual behavior to its larger social context. Through this article, students

were able to interrogate the mainstream view that Latinx immigrants are lazy and that

their laziness is the reason they are poor. Student-participants also describe the in-class

videos as significant learning moments; and as I will detail in chapter five, based on

student writing and focus group conversations, the emotions student-participants both

experienced and observed while watching the videos appear to be key to their impact. As

such, the videos were especially effective for helping students more fully recognize—and

importantly, feel—the impacts of oppressive structures on individual lives. Thus, valuing

personal experience through counterstories illuminates relations of power, making visible

the ghosts who demand change. And this examination prepares students to articulate the

actions—policies, practices, and daily behaviors—that can contribute to greater equity.

Feminist pedagogy also values students' personal and learning experiences, as

well as the challenges they face, and these values must be supported through our teaching

strategies and practices. As I mentioned above, in chapter five I describe elements of the

model's feminist pedagogical approach student-participants identified as important to

their course experience. These include my learning student names, respecting student

contributions to class discussions, providing detailed feedback on assignments, and using

a fair grading system. And this loops back to the first principle of feminist pedagogy—

and the central aim of the Feminist-Humanities model—to demonstrate social change in

the classroom in concrete ways that illustrate the attention, care, and respect we ask

students to apply to their classmates and those whose stories are shared through course

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40 See Fisher (2001) and Reed (2010/2005).

materials. If our practices are *sticky* (Ahmed, 2004a), students may carry these behaviors

forward well beyond their classroom experience.

III.   How does what and how we teach impact our students and our communities?

This dissertation investigates the third question of feminist pedagogy to ask about

the Feminist-Humanities model: *How does what and how we teach impact our students*

and our communities? While the scope of this investigation is on the first half of this

question, it also *reaches toward* (Gordon, 1997) a greater understanding of the longer-

term implications of the curricular model. As stated in chapter one, my overarching

research question is: *Has the Feminist-Humanities model built students' capacity for*

change by providing them with the tools they need to move forward differently? To

investigate this question, I chose narrative analysis as my research methodology because

its ethical and strategic aims closely align with those of the Feminist-Humanities model,

as described in this chapter. Because of the model's roots in feminist theory and

pedagogy, my methodology was a specifically feminist narrative analysis. Due to the co-

constitutive nature of language and thought (Saville-Troike, 2003), an examination of

students' language choices and patterns within their learning narratives provided a

concrete way to locate individual-level shifts within the struggle to know as well as

identify patterns among and across student-participants. In locating these shifts, narrative

analysis does not segment language, which allowed me to respect and reveal the *complex*

personhood (Gordon, 1997) of student-participants within the rich and expansive context

of their writing and conversations (Maynes et al., 2008). Since personal narratives occur

where psychology meets social construction and social discourse (Maynes et al., 2008),

students' learning narratives offered the opportunity to examine this intersection at the

moment of co-constitution.

Narrative analysis was an especially useful tool to investigate a teaching and learning model with a central metaphor of storytelling that uses reflexive writing assignments as the main form of academic performance. Narrative analysis, like feminist pedagogy, demands an ethical strategy in its research design, data analysis, data interpretation, and claims. Importantly, in keeping with the metaphor of storytelling, students' reflexive writing can be viewed as the evolving narrative of their learning, as they evaluate and reposition their knowledge of themselves and the social world based on their interactions with the model's pedagogical interventions. As such feminist narrative analysis supported the components, aims, and values of the model.

As is clear from the scholarship presented in this chapter, feminist pedagogy makes a centerpiece of its values; therefore, to assess the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model, I chose feminist narrative analysis because it mirrors these values. An explicitly feminist approach allowed me to respect and take account of students-participants' *complex personhood* (Gordon, 1997), recognizing that students' lives are complicated, and the ways they negotiate learning in a social justice course can be fraught. A focus on the deep context of storytelling allowed me to recognize the complex ways students' social identities impact how they interpret their experiences and the ways their interpretations can limit or expand their learning. As such, feminist narrative analysis allowed me to recognize that student learning narratives occur in relationship to their social identities as well as their sociopolitical, educational, and historical context. A focus on narrative led me to identify patterns, connections, divergences, and *sticky* words (Ahmed, 2004a) to recognize the co-constitution of language and learning and the work

of students' words, including the affective heft of their language choices. Narrative analysis has an ongoing, process-oriented approach that keeps continual interrogation and reflexivity always at its center. In addition to students' reflexive writing, my reflexive process through my teacher/researcher journal allowed me to account for my social identities and social position relative to student-participants and how they influence my analysis and interpretations of data. In chapter three I present a detailed description of narrative analysis—its aims, forms, methods, opportunities, limitations, and how I used the methodology in this dissertation.

CHAPTER THREE: Feminist Narrative Analysis

Storytelling

Storytelling is the guiding metaphor of the Feminist-Humanities curricular model because of its ability to communicate lived experience with both nuance and complexity: the small detail within its larger social context. When telling stories, we organize our thoughts and make sense of our experiences to communicate their meaning to others. Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett (2008) say this makes the stories we tell a rich source of information for social research. However, they also caution researchers that story's surface simplicity belies a deep and layered complexity, and each layer demands conscious attention as stories are examined and interpreted through the research process. Additionally, when we examine stories, investigators must attend to many questions, such as: What is the teller's intent? Who is their audience? Are they trying to persuade? If so, who are they trying to persuade, and in what ways? Stories must be contextualized to be understood. We tell stories for a variety of reasons: to make meaning of our life experiences, to forge connections, to share our knowledge and experience, and to engage others in our lives. However, we also tell stories to draw separations between ourselves and those we view as *other*. We can use stories to justify our action or inaction. And stories must be historicized, as they are told in a given moment, by situated tellers to situated listeners, within a set of local conditions that also operate within a larger cultural landscape (Maynes, et al., 2008).[41] Therefore, investigating stories requires a methodology that takes account of these many, varied,

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[41] See chapter one for a review of the local and sociopolitical conditions for the development of the Feminist-Humanities model.

complex, intersecting, and sometimes contradictory elements. Importantly, these adjectives mirror those used in chapter two to describe the theoretical concepts in feminist theory, feminist pedagogy, and the humanities ways of knowing that inform the Feminist-Humanities model. For these reasons, the examination of stories was an elegant methodological fit for this dissertation, which used student learning narratives (both written and spoken) to ask questions about the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model on student learning. In this chapter I introduce *narrative analysis*, my chosen methodology, and describe its theoretical frame, defining elements, and the specific ways it was effective for examining student learning. I also describe the uses of narrative analysis, its potential, and its limitations. I close with an overview of my analytic process.

Connecting the Individual and the Social

Maynes et al. (2008) tell us personal narratives are created where psychology meets social construction. The authors describe personal narratives as the *connective tissue* between the individual and the social, offering a nuanced view of how the narrator experiences the world. Further they say narratives offer the opportunity to study *whole persons* at this intersection, within context and history, and in all their complexity and contradiction. Rather than a focus on either the micro level (psychology) or the macro level (sociology), narratives allow researchers to investigate both at their moment of co-constitution. Because the Feminist-Humanities model is designed to highlight the link between the individual and the social at every level—and to look closely at the moment when language and life are co-created—it is precisely this intersection and its tensions that made the examination of student learning narratives a useful source of information for this investigation.

However, it is also important to recognize that as a process of self-creation, storytelling is not neutral (Gordon, 1997; Maynes, et al., 2008; Riessman, 1993). As narrators, we make choices about what to tell and how to tell it (Maynes et al., 2008; Riessman, 1993 & 2008). Some choices are conscious, whereas others occur beneath our awareness. Thus, contextually rich methods are necessary to examine the ways these choices manifest and what kinds of information they can make available to researchers. As with any act of creation, stories do not spring from nothingness. As Maynes et al. (2008) describe, narratives of our cultural mythology hold sway in both our content and presentation. This is similar to Miranda Fricker's (2007) discussion of the influence of the images and discourses of the *social imagination*.[42] We are attuned to cultural plotlines, story arcs, mythologies, and literary motifs, and we incorporate these into our storytelling (Maynes et al., 2008). As such, our stories are informed by the stereotypes and prejudices of our *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007).

This aspect of story was especially important for me to attend to since I was investigating a course about identities and the complex ways they inform our knowledge-building, worldview, and social interactions. They were a rich data source, but interpreting student narratives was also a multi-layered, labor-intensive process that required me to recognize and acknowledge that student-participant storytellers were not neutral, but neither were my interpretations of their stories. This was especially true within my feminist approach where it is necessary to attend to power, relationships, and identity performance, those of both narrators and mine as the researcher. Feminist

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[42] See chapter two for an in depth discussion of the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) and its importance for the Feminist-Humanities model and this investigation.

narrative analysis was a potent methodology for investigating the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model on student learning, but extracting its potential required time and focused attention to each of these layers, discretely and in concert.

What is Narrative Analysis?

Catherine Kohler Riessman (1993) describes *narrative analysis* as an "inherently interdisciplinary" research methodology with origins in literary theory and criticism (p. 1). It is interdisciplinary both in its methods and in the fields where it may be used. Riessman says narrative analysis garnered attention in the human sciences in the 1980s as the *narrative turn* developed from within the larger *interpretive turn* that began in the social sciences and humanities in the 1970s. The interpretive and narrative turns were spurred by a growing dissatisfaction with scientific research methods for adequately explaining human behavior.[43] After moving into use in the human sciences, narrative methods achieved wide use in oral history research (Maynes et al., 2008). Of life stories, Maynes, et al. (2008) tell us, "read carefully, they provide unique insights into the connections between individual life trajectories and the collective forces and institutions beyond the individual. As such, they offer a methodologically privileged location from which to comprehend human agency" (p. 3). Life stories offer both expansiveness and nuance. Although *life stories* do not precisely describe student learning narratives, I argue that the data sources used in this dissertation—student-participants' reflexive writing and focus group conversations—capture the ways students describe themselves around categories of identity and position themselves within social structures. And capturing this

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[43] The *affective turn* described in chapter two occurred contemporaneously with the interpretive and narrative turns, and each shares relational elements, especially in their critique of positivism and its claims of objectivity.

information at the beginning of the semester and again at the end makes narrative analytic methods effective tools for interrogating the ways student learning narratives evolve as they interact with the pedagogical interventions of the Feminist-Humanities model. To support this argument, below I describe the theoretical concepts undergirding narrative analysis and how they fit the specific aims of this investigation.

Theoretical Framework of Narrative Analysis

Although his most influential work was written in the 1930s, the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin became widely known in the 1970s as the poststructural characteristics of intertextuality, subjectivity, and heteroglossia came together in the developing field of *semiotics*: the study of meaning-making (Leitch, Cain, Finke, Johnson, McGowan, Sharpley-Whiting, & Williams, 2010).[44] Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981, English translation) made a significant and lasting contribution to what we now call narrative analysis through his concept of *dialogism*, which seeks to understand the *multivocality*[45] of literature, or the ways individual works of literature are in dialogue with all previous works within the cultural canon (Leitch et al., 2010). This underscores the co-constitution of language and culture discussed in chapter two (Saville-Troike, 2003). Additionally, Bakhtin describes how our interaction with new works can alter our understanding of previous works, as dialogue moves in both directions (Leitch et al., 2010). Bakhtin was primarily interested in the novel. He felt the structuralist approach to literary interpretation did not adequately account for the novel because it failed to consider the sociological level (Leitch et al., 2010). As such, Bakhtin's *dialogic*

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[44] According to Leitch, et al. (2010), linguist, literary critic, cultural theorist, and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, an important figure in the early development of the field of semiotics, is largely responsible for bringing Bakhtin's work to the attention of her contemporary intellectuals in the 1970s.

[45] See also Haraway (1988) for use of this term in feminist theory.

imagination holds explanatory power for examining how bodies of knowledge are built, how they inform and organize our thoughts and actions, and how they archive and circulate affect,[46] each of which are components of the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007).

Bakhtin offers a process for elucidating the relationship between subjectivity and language, or "how the speaking subject is both constituted through and threatened by the logic of signification"[47] (Leitch, et al., 2010, p. 2067). Bakhtin calls this *ventriloquation*,[48] a rich tool for unearthing social discourses, or cultural narratives, within the stories we tell, and thus useful in narrative research, particularly for a teaching and learning model that guides students to excavate and examine the influence of the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) on their assumptions and behaviors. Just as Bakhtin's *dialogism* examines character arc within the novel, I argue it is also a useful tool for identifying markers of change that occur over time in students' reflexive writing and their interactions with other learners. Bakhtin's *dialogism* recognizes that—in this investigation—knowledge is not built in isolation but rather in dialogue with all previous knowledge, and new knowledge alters and reinterprets our previous knowledge.[49] As such, narratives are "deeply constitutive of reality" (Riessman, 1993, p. 4).

I used Bakhtin's concept of *dialogism* to examine the meaning student-participants assigned to their course learning, in particular the ways cultural assumptions, power relations, and the affect they carry influenced their learning narratives. By taking

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[46] As explored in chapter two through Ahmed's (2004a) concept of *affective economies*.

[47] According to Leitch, et al. (2010) this relationship is at the heart of Julia Kristeva's work.

[48] For an example of its usefulness, see discussion later in this chapter on the work of Brown (1999).

[49] Thus, Bakhtin's concept of *dialogism* further elucidates the influence of the *social imagination* on our thoughts and actions and the potential of altering its images and discourses to create social change, as explored in the previous chapter through Fricker (2007).

the above definition of *dialogism* and replacing the word *literature* with *knowledge* (as I have done in the previous paragraph), the usefulness of his concept for this investigation becomes clearer: *dialogism* offers the opportunity to locate the influences of cultural knowledge on the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007), the complex ways its images and discourses inform our worldview and how we perform our identities, and a pathway to examine the ways students reinterpret their knowledge—how they alter the images in their heads—at the end of the course's epistemic project.

Significantly for the Feminist-Humanities model, narrative analysis "takes as its object of investigation the story itself" (Riessman, 1993, p. 1). Riessman (1993) says this approach preserves the "sequence" and "structure" "to see how respondents...impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives" (p. 2). Preserving sequence and structure differentiates narrative analysis from other forms of discourse analysis, and it provides the grounds to examine student learning narratives within deep context and "in their own terms" (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 10). This aspect was especially useful for locating changes over time. Thus, narrative analysis investigates whole, contextualized stories as told by complex, situated tellers. This methodology asks: "Why was the story told *that* way?" (Riessman, 1993, p. 2, emphasis in original). Through this dissertation I extended this question to ask what the ways students told their reflexive narratives could illuminate about their course learning.

Contingencies of Representation

One of the hallmarks of narrative analysis is its focus on how research is represented. Riessman (1993) identifies five levels of representation within the research process, while also highlighting the "porous boundaries between them" (p. 8) and the

impossibility of neutrality. The five levels are: *attending*, *telling*, *transcribing*, *analyzing*, and *reading*. To illustrate them, Riessman describes a story she tells friends and colleagues about a walk on the beach she took during a research visit to South India. First, she describes the scene on the beach telling what she noticed; thus, her very thinking process during the primary experience gives meaning to what she notes and how the information she does not attend to is lost.[50] She attends to what she considers significant: because of her interest in gender, she notices the fishermen selling their catch to local women and how gender roles inform their transactions. Second, her storytelling is "the performance of a personal narrative" (p. 9). In telling *her* story, she orders the events, highlights certain elements, and ignores others. Thus, the telling is a representative construction of the primary experience. She says, "My rendering draws on resources from my cultural context, notably the gender-based division of labor that all participants in the conversation [her listening audience] value as a category of analysis" (p. 10). Of note, she constructs her narrative based on how she would like to be viewed by her audience. She then refashions the story further by responding to questions from her audience members. Thus, the telling is co-constructed: language shapes the story, and this shape exists outside the primary experience of her walk on the beach. Third, had her walk been captured by audio- or videotape, there would be an additional layer of representation. Even videotape might not capture the full context, for example her body language and that of those she observed. Then, if transcribed, further decisions would construct her representation of the transcripts. Riessman says, "thoughtful investigators

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[50] See also Jaggar (2013/1989) and my discussion of this work in chapter two.

no longer assume the transparency of language" (p.12), and "There is no one, true representation of spoken language" (p. 13). Transcription is an interpretive process, driven by our conceptual frames, values, and myriad other elements that inform how we recognize and represent the captured words. Fourth, a researcher analyzes the transcript. Riessman says, "the analyst creates a metastory" (p. 13). Once again, values, conceptual frames, political alignments, anticipated audience, and much more inform the analysis. Finally, the fifth level is the reading of the research report. The reader (or listener in her example) has only the written (or spoken) representation, and they in turn bring their interpretations to this text, based on their assumptions, values, politics, ideologies, and conceptual frames. There is a collaborative process between text and reader. The text is not only interpreted differently by different readers, but also differently by the same reader at different points in time, within different historical or cultural contexts. As such, rereadings can lead to vastly different interpretations, as "all texts stand on moving ground" (p. 15). Thus, representations are embedded at every level with culture, history, temporality, politics, and more, and each level of representation is a multilayered, mediated process.

Riessman (1993) says the use of personal narratives further heightens the interpretative nature of research. She illustrates this by describing the disagreement about the definition of *narrative*, as well as the debate about how to determine where a narrative begins and ends. She presents the differing perspectives of Kenneth Burke (1945), James Paul Gee (1986), and William Labov (1972) for determining the structure of narrative, while underscoring the importance of both context and meaning. She explores the impact of the interview experience itself on the narrator's product, the

interaction of interviewer and interviewee in the ascription of meaning, the inherent power relations, the performative element of the narrator, and the significance of the larger social context surrounding the interview event. Although not all of these are variables in this investigation, they offer a useful framework for attending to positionality, audience, and intention, along with the necessity to account for how I acquired student learning narratives.

Riessman's (1993) concerns about interpretative representation echo chapter two's discussion of feminist pedagogy, specifically around the influence of the *social imagination* on our perceptions and actions (Fricker, 2007), how emotions pre-figure our values (Jaggar, 2013/1989), how words do *work* (Ahmed, 2004a), how affect enters narrative (Ahmed, 2004a), and how we perform different selves in different situations within the course of our daily lives (Fisher, 2001).[51] Within each of Riessman's five levels of representation, a situated, contextualized researcher actively interprets social phenomena and makes choices about what to attend to, what to tell, and how to transcribe, analyze, and interpret it; and then a reader interacts with the investigator's representations to develop their own interpretations. By acknowledging the active and ongoing social construction of research participants, investigators, and readers, feminist narrative analysis, like feminist theory and feminist pedagogy, critiques claims of objectivity or *value-free knowledge* (Jaggar, 2013/1989).[52] Feminist narrative analysis accounts for these contingencies by explicitly naming them in the research report. I describe the contingencies of this investigation at the end of this chapter.

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[51] See detailed discussion of Fisher's (2001) description of *performance* in the next section of this chapter.
[52] See chapter two for greater detail on Jaggar's (2013/1989) argument.

Feminist Narrative Analysis

As described in chapter two, feminist pedagogy makes a centerpiece of its values; therefore, investigations of feminist pedagogy must mirror its values. And Avery Gordon's (1997) concept of *complex personhood* and her recommendations for social researchers are useful for identifying the essential elements of a feminist research methodology. Through her expansive exploration of her statement that *life is complicated*, Gordon encourages researchers to take account of the *density* and *nuance* not always captured in social research. She challenges social investigators to expand their perspectives and research strategies to consider the richness of *complex personhood*. She says investigations of complex personhood through the human and social sciences "…constitute less a scientifically positive project than a cultural practice that organizes particular rituals of storytelling told by situated investigators" (p. 10). This is also the aim of this dissertation: as a situated investigator—a teacher/researcher—I developed an organizational structure to examine the evolving nature of the learning narratives told by student-participants through their reflexive writing and focus group conversations. Gordon (1997) describes this approach as postpositivist—a core component of the Feminist-Humanities model and of narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993)—because it recognizes narratives as "fictions of the real" experienced "as true" (p. 11).[53] This understanding allowed me to read student-participant learner narratives as the ways they make sense of their social world and the challenges to their assumptions that develop from the epistemic project of the Feminist-Humanities model. The deep context of

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[53] See also chapter two for a discussion of *postpositivist realist theory* and how it has informed the Feminist-Humanities model.

narrative analysis, its focus on whole stories rather than fragments—and its recognition of sequence, power, positionality, and intersectional and shifting identities as significant elements of analysis—acknowledges and respects the situated *complex personhood* of both the research participants and the researcher. Importantly, Gordon says rather than "an analysis of social relations of power," this approach offers an opportunity to ask "how power operates" (p. 10), a useful tool for investigating the stories students tell in response to prompts to examine their social world and how they fit into it. In Gordon's (1997) terminology, these prompts work as *conjurings* through which students interrogate the "relationship among power, knowledge, and experience" (p. 23). Guiding students to examine this relationship, and the variety of ways *complex personhood* develops from it, is at the core of feminist pedagogy and the Feminist-Humanities model, making it also a useful concept to interrogate how students learn through the model.

In the following section I provide two applications of narrative analysis and describe how each informed my research design and data analysis. I close this chapter with a detailed discussion of how I used these methodological models in this investigation and an introduction to what I learned.

Dialogic/Performance Narrative Analysis

As Riessman (2008) demonstrates, narrative analysis includes audience and intention as explicit investigative variables, particularly within what she terms the *dialogic/performance* approach. Riessman says that dialogic/performance narrative analysis takes into account the elements of both *thematic* and *structural* approaches (which she also describes) but views narrative from a broader perspective by also examining interaction. She situates this approach within two main theoretical frames. The

first is Erving Goffman's (1959) *symbolic interaction theory,* in which identities are

constructed in order to persuade. Riessman describes how Goffman highlights the drama

or *show* of the narrative: how the actor seeks to present his or her best *face* to their

audience. This acknowledges a performative element within the telling, where the

narrative is co-constructed through dialogue between the speaker/writer and their

audience/reader, as illustrated earlier in this chapter through Riessman's (1993) five

levels of representation. However, Maynes et al. (2008) point out the limitations of

Goffman's dramaturgical approach, which they view as ahistorical. As they argue, deep

context and historical positioning are essential to the examinations of meaning-making

that can be accomplished through narratives.

Second, Riessman (2008) situates dialogic/performance narrative analysis within

Bakhtin's (1981) literary narrative analysis in how it seeks to identify the plurality of

voices that speak through narratives, such as the voices of politics and history. Riessman

(2008) says, "dialogic/performance analysis can uncover the insidious ways structures of

inequality and power—class, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and more—work

their way into what appears to be 'simply' talk..." (p. 115), or for this investigation, what

appear to be simple or neutral descriptions of course learning. This approach recognizes

the positionality of the actors, or narrators, which is also significant within feminist

pedagogy where *pedagogical performance* (Fisher, 2001; hooks, 1994) is an explicit

variable. Within both dialogic/performance narrative analysis and feminist pedagogy, the

power and positionality of the speaker/writer/student and their relationship to their

audience/reader/instructor are significant variables. For this investigation, a focus on

power recognizes the positionality of the course instructor as well as students' desire to

present their best *face* to the instructor (and to themselves). This form of narrative analysis provides the grounds to interrogate the interplay of speaker/listener (or text/reader) in the development of narratives as identities are constructed and performed. Berenice Malka Fisher (2001) says an understanding of performance acknowledges our complex, shifting, and intersecting identities and what they mean for the ways we experience the world. She says, "I value the attempt to 'get out of ourselves' to see ourselves as others see us and to understand how the world looks from the viewpoint of other selves" (p. 51). Within a teaching model built on feminist pedagogy, and specifically from the postpositivist realist view that identity is socially constructed while also having profound impact on how we experience the world, the dialogic/performance form of narrative analysis is useful for investigating how the Feminist-Humanities model influences students' evolving understanding of themselves and the world gained through the study of differing perspectives.

Ideas around interrogating knowledge, examining counterstories, and "see[ing] ourselves as others see us and to understand how the world looks from the viewpoint of other selves" (Fisher, 2001. p. 51) are at the core of the Feminist-Humanities model's epistemic project. And Fisher's (2001) language was an invaluable tool for my data analysis and interpretation, specifically her concept of *shifts in attention*. Like Gordon's (1997) statements that *life is complicated* and *personhood is complex*, and Ahmed's (2004a) discussion of the *work* of words, Fisher's term at first appears simplistic. However, like these other examples, its analytic heft has been crucial for this investigation. In discussing the overall process of consciousness-raising, specifically as a feminist project, Fisher (2001) says:

The first and often most striking aspect of this process concerns a *shift in attention*. This shift may be quite abrupt, when we suddenly pay attention to something that has been completely obscured or ignored. Some women who engage in early consciousness-raising described their new awareness as an instantaneous 'click' of recognition: a new view or interpretation of gender relations. But the shift in attention also can be more gradual...As I become more aware, I also begin to think about what might be different. (p. 34, emphasis in original).

Several features of this quotation are important for the Feminist-Humanities model and this investigation of its impact on student learning. First, the language itself—*shift in attention*—signifies subtlety that is also seismic in its potential. Additionally, Fisher speaks to both the *abrupt* as well as the *gradual* (perhaps cumulative) nature of shifts. Like a kaleidoscope[54] as we turn the wheel, sometimes the shift is small, but as we continue to turn it, sometimes a significant change appears, and everything looks dramatically different. It is possible this dramatic change is made possible through several smaller shifts, perhaps those too subtle to recognize in the moment but which culminate in a noticeable change. While it is easy to see the larger changes, perhaps we should also look more closely for the smaller ones that are difficult to detect.

In her final sentence above, Fisher makes a similar connection to that of Gloria Anzaldúa (2013/1992). As quoted in chapter two, Anzaldúa says, "Nothing happens in the 'real' world unless it first happens in the images in our heads" (p. 261). Fisher (2001)

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[54] See also Nicholson (2013) for another iteration of the kaleidoscope metaphor in relation to feminist knowledge-building.

says, "As I become more aware, I also begin to think about what might be different" (p.

34). As discussed in chapter two, the images and discourses of the *social imagination*

(Fricker, 2007) are deeply linked, and each informs the other, our thinking, and our

actions. In keeping with my kaleidoscope metaphor, its shifting sands—the evolving

images and narratives of our *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007)—spur us to see in new

ways. When you alter the image or narrative, you alter what is possible.[55],[56] Thus, an

excavation of the images and language of the social imagination and the opportunity to

view them from shifting perspectives and through different analytic lenses—knowledge,

identity, intersectionality, structure, power, language, and affect—could engender a *shift*

in attention (Fisher, 2001) that guides students to consider new ways of thinking and

doing that can lead to different outcomes. As I introduce at the end of this chapter and

discuss in detail in chapters four and five, using dialogic/performance narrative analysis

to investigate student learning narratives led me to identify three shifts in attention that

provided significant information about the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model and

specifically the ways students' social identities informed their learning performance.

Riessman (2008) provides three detailed exemplars of dialogic/performance

narrative analysis. Two of these, the works of Karen Gallas (2003) and Lyn Mikel Brown

(1999), occur within educational settings. Their setting, along with their rich research

methods, made them strong models for my research design and analytic choices.

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[55] See also Greene (2009) and Postman (1996) and discussion of these works in chapter two.
[56] See also Ahmed's (2004b) concept of *wonder,* discussed in chapter two.

Teacher/Researcher Journal (Gallas, 2003)

As Riessman (2008) makes clear, context takes center stage in dialogic/performance narrative analysis. To provide greater course context and an additional perspective on the classroom experience, I kept a teacher/researcher journal that incorporated elements of both participant observation and autoethnographic,[57] reflexive writing. I captured and interrogated students' reactions to course materials and classroom discussions, my observations and interactions with students, and my reactions to each. The intention was to mark salient classroom moments, while also adding an additional dimension of thick description through participant-observation. Reading student papers and my journal together was a relational pathway to identify and critically examine salient pedagogical moments.

I modeled my journal on the most complex of Riessman's (2008) exemplars of dialogic/performance narrative analysis. Karen Gallas (2003), a first grade teacher, provides an in-depth narrative analysis of *sharing time* in her classroom. Through her interrogation of taped sessions, along with her extensive field notes and reflexive commentary, she illuminates the ways students build their identities within the group through these sharing sessions and how their relationships to one another and to this daily activity evolved during their year together. In discussing one student, Jiana,[58] and the ways she uses *sharing time* to connect with her fellow classmates, Gallas says, "Something important had happened. The power of the stories, and the community of listeners that the stories had created, had become part of the fabric of the classroom" (as

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[57] See Chang (2008) for a detailed definition and description of autoethnography as a research method.
[58] A pseudonym. See Gallas (2003) for greater detail on Jiana's journey and how she used *sharing time* to connect with her classmates in ways she could not outside this class activity because of her marginalized status.

quoted in Riessman, 2008, p. 134). As Gallas interrogates her field notes and her reflections on daily sharing and the evolution of the group dynamic over time, she is an active presence and an important variable in the analysis. Capturing my perspective on the dynamics and interactions of individual class sessions through Gallas' journal model gave me access to another dimension of information. And examining my journal alongside students' final papers and focus group conversations allowed me to identify the three *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001) outlined at the end of this chapter.

'Listening Guide' (Brown, 1999)

Riessman (2008) also discusses Lyn Mikel Brown (1999), specifically her chapter *Mad Girls in the Classroom*. Brown audio- and videotaped two groups of eleven and twelve year old girls from two very different communities in Maine as they engaged in discussions around gender. Brown uses Bakhtin's theoretical framework to highlight "the power and positionality in the girls' talk" (p. 117) and to interrogate her own social location and positionality and how they influence what the girls share and how she interprets their stories. Brown *listened* to (watched each videotape or read each transcript) five times, *attending* to different elements, foregrounding each separately for depth of analysis, while tracking her thoughts and reactions through an autoethnographic reflexive process. Brown invokes Bakhtin's concept of *ventriloquation* to tease out the plurality of voices speaking through the girls' narratives—including both national and local iterations of culture, gender, socioeconomic status, and more.

Brown's *Listening Guide*, along with the way she codes her transcripts with colored pencils, writing detailed commentary during each *listening*, is a comprehensive model for examining student-participant narratives, while simultaneously incorporating

the researcher's self-reflexive narration to examine the complex ways social location, positionality, and other contextual elements influence what is noticed and how it is interpreted. It is a strong model for teasing out overlapping and interacting elements to disentangle them for analysis. Thus, her model responds to the caution of Maynes, et al. (2008) that each layer demands conscious attention as stories are examined and interpreted throughout the research process. For me, it offered a method to examine the intricate ways the individual and the social collide in moments of self-creation within student learning narratives and opportunities to think deeply about the challenges I faced when analyzing, interpreting, and representing their words. As such it was a detailed and instructive model for how I used narrative analysis to locate themes and *sticky* words (Ahmed, 2004a), patterns across student writing, and significant moments in the focus group conversations. Brown's model gave me an organizing framework to disentangle elements for analysis but also consider the larger landscape of student learning. Thus, it allowed me to examine individual students within their social learning process. Although these connections took time and repeated *listenings* to achieve, had I not used Brown's analytic framework—specifically paying attention to elements separately through multiple *listenings*—I might not have recognized important patterns and their divergences across students. I describe my process later in this chapter.

Validity and Other Limitations

Narrative analysis is a fundamentally different research methodology from typical approaches to social science research. As such, what can be learned from it also differs. Like feminist theory and feminist pedagogy, narrative analysis focuses on the subjective, contingent, and particular. Consistent with the feminist approach, analysis and

interpretation require complex, multilayered examinations of positionality, power, and other contextual elements within the "incomplete, open-ended, and contingent" nature of research (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 127). Maynes et al. (2008) say, "Studying whole persons involves an epistemological strategy that sees individuals *both* as unique *and* as connected to social and cultural worlds and relationships that affect their life choices and life stories" (p. 10, emphasis in original). This mirrors the relational analysis fundamental to feminist pedagogy, specifically from a postpositivist realist frame (Moya, 2010/2001), and once again underscores the deep link between the individual and the social and the ways lived experience and the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) interact and inform each other. When done reflexively, an explicitly feminist approach to narrative analysis examines the individual actor within their social alignments and allows the researcher to locate changes in these alignments over time.

It is necessary to consider issues of validation in narrative analysis research. Riessman (1993) says these issues are "as yet unresolved dilemmas for the field" (p. 64). However, she offers useful ways to consider what validity might resemble. She says, "Meaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal. All we have is talk and texts that represent reality partially, selectively, and imperfectly" (p. 15). Since storytellers rarely tell the story the same way twice, and storytelling is never neutral, all the contingencies already explored in this chapter apply here as well: power, positionality, temporality, location, audience, intent, and more. Additionally, a different researcher would likely represent the same data differently, based on their own power, position, intent, academic background, theoretical frames, experience, values, identities, audience, and other contextual elements. Since the methodology critiques claims of objectivity,

Riessman (1993) says, "In a word, traditional notions of reliability simply do not apply to narrative studies, and validity must be radically reconceptualized" (p. 65). She defines validation as "the trustworthiness of interpretations," since subjectivity does not offer the possibility of claiming "truth" (p. 65).

Riessman (1993) identifies four ways to reconceptualize the validation of narrative analysis: *persuasiveness*, *correspondence*, *coherence*, and *pragmatic use*. To understand *persuasiveness*, she asks, "Is the interpretation reasonable and convincing?" (p. 65). She says, "Persuasiveness is greatest when theoretical claims are supported with evidence from informants' accounts and when alternative interpretations of the data are considered" (p. 65). However, an interpretation can persuade in a given moment and not persuade in another, as "texts have unstable meanings" (p. 66). Regarding *correspondence*, Riessman says the analysis can be checked by taking it back to the participants. However, as postpositivist realism tells us, our research participants are not definitive interpreters of their own experience. Additionally, participants' interpretations can change over time and in different situations. Regarding *coherence*, Riessman references the work of Agar and Hobbs (1982) who identify three kinds of coherence: *global*, *local*, and *themal*. They say each kind of coherence can lead to differing views of the narrative, although interpretation is strengthened when each view reinforces the others. However, Riessman cautions that their approach does not consider the interaction of an interview, and thus is not applicable to all investigations. Her final process of validity is *pragmatic use*, which she defines as "the extent to which a particular study becomes the basis for others' work" (p. 68). However, since this is future-oriented, relies on the collective work of the field, and "assumes the socially constructed nature of

science...it does not help an individual investigator argue in a research report for the validity of a narrative analysis" (p. 68).

Riessman (1993) offers four kinds of information a researcher can provide within their report to support the trustworthiness of their work: "(a) describing how the interpretations were produced, (b) making visible what we did, (c) specifying how we accomplished successive transformations, and (d) making primary data available to other researchers" (p. 68). She underscores the importance of explicitly describing context and contingencies within the report, as well as foundational assumptions, values, and theoretical considerations. Finally, she says, "There is no canonical approach in interpretive work…" (p. 69). She contends this is also the case in quantitative research, as narrative analysis, like feminist theory, contests scientific objectivity.[59] Riessman says it is necessary to consider different kinds of validation as appropriate for different kinds of research, reinforcing once again the importance of context. This is similar to Frances A. Maher's (1998/1987) statement quoted in chapter one that "Feminist pedagogies are a series of processes, never 'done' and always evolving" (p. 25). So too, the validity of interpretive work is an ongoing and evolving process.

Narrative analysis has other limitations. As Riessman (1993) says, it cannot be used with large numbers of participants or with "nameless, faceless subjects" (p. 69). And since her discussion is focused on oral, first-person accounts, she says written narratives, like those used in this investigation, require adaptations. She describes the methods of narrative analysis as "slow and painstaking. They require attention to subtlety: nuances of speech, organization of a response, local contexts of production, social discourses that

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[59] See also Haraway (2010/1988) & Jaggar (2013/1989).

shape what is said, and what cannot be spoken" (p. 69). She says that while social scientists theorize about the general from the particular, the particular is only a beginning point, and "comparative work is desirable" (p. 70).

Riessman's (1993) discussion of validity was important for considering what information could be made available through the design, methodology, and data sources for this investigation, as well as which supporting materials to include, how to present my interpretations, the importance of describing my research process, and the limits of what I could claim. I strive to make these elements clear and accessible. *Persuasiveness* is likely the form of validity that best fits this dissertation. As such, in chapters four and five I offer direct evidence from the written and spoken narratives of student-participants alongside my interpretations. While my interpretations have been systematically achieved through close, careful, and repeated *listenings* (Brown, 1999), and informed through my years of teaching experience, and in this course specifically, just as I caution my students, I have tried to keep always in mind that I may have missed important information and that my interpretations maybe be wrong. Additionally, I have provided details of the local course context as well as its sociopolitical and historical position,[60] the curricular structure,[61] how assignments were acquired and graded,[62] and contingencies of my power, positionality, and theoretical framing for the curricular model and my pedagogical practice.[63] Finally, I am cautious in my claims about what this investigation reveals about

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[60] See chapter one for a detailed discussion of the course's local, sociopolitical, and historical context.
[61] See chapter two for a discussion of the scaffolding and sequencing of the Feminist-Humanities model. See also Appendix D for course syllabus.
[62] See Appendices E and F for instructions for first and final papers. See Appendices G and H for the questions used in the focus group.
[63] See chapter two for a detailed discussion of the Feminist-Humanities model's theoretical framework, along with an in-depth discussion of feminist pedagogy.

the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model on student learning and the larger implications of what my findings can offer to ongoing conversations about best practices in social justice education.

From Teacher to Researcher

Riessman (1993) closes her discussion of validity with the statement, "Narrative analysis allows for systematic study of personal experience and meaning: how events have been constructed by active subjects" (p. 70). This final statement well describes why narrative analysis was the best methodology for this investigation. This dissertation examined the ways student-participants described their learning in a specific, one-semester social justice course to examine the impact of the Feminist-Humanities curricular model on student learning. What took some time for me to recognize is that students' descriptions of their learning are the defining element of this investigation. Having taught this course for thirteen years, I was accustomed to reading student papers as a grading instructor. And for a while this lens caused me to despair that students had learned much less than I had hoped and that what I might learn from my analysis would be limited. However, as I began to expand and vary my analytic lens, just as I teach students to do, I was able to recognize patterns among and across student responses. As I evolved as a researcher, I began to recognize the wealth of information made available through students' reflexive learning narratives. For example, I began to recognize the performance of student learning—how they told their stories—so I might ask why they told them *that* way (Riessman, 1993), and what *work* their words were doing (Ahmed, 2004a). And it was the patterns across students, and their variations, that led me to realize even those I had initially identified as *weaker* papers—those written quickly,

with many proofreading errors, and with little or no reference to course materials—

offered significant information about student learning, in particular around the complex

ways identities interact with the learning process.

Some of my greatest analytic insights were achieved only after I gave greater

attention to student-participants' social identities and how they influenced their writing as

a performative dialogue with their audience (the instructor, but perhaps also themselves).

Tellers gives clues about how they wish to be interpreted. As Riessman (1993) describes

it, language "is not merely descriptive…[I]t is trying to *move people*" (quoting Burke,

1950, p. 21, emphasis in original). However, as Maynes et al. (2008) say, it is important

to regard research participants "as privileged but not definitive observers of their own

historical contexts" (p. 45). This echoes a longstanding caution in feminist scholarship

from *standpoint theory* (Hartsock, 1984) and *situated knowledges* (Haraway, 1988)

through *postpositivist realist theory* (Moya & Hames-García, 2000) that all views are

partial. Dialogic/performance narrative analysis takes this into account. As Gordon

(1997), Maynes et al. (2008), and Riessman (1993) each discuss, the line between fiction

and nonfiction is fine, ever-shifting, and not easily teased apart in our stories. However,

as Gordon (1997) says, "our stories can be understood as fictions of the real" (p. 11).

Thus, as students narrate their course learning, they balance authenticity with their desire

to project a positive image of themselves as learners to their instructor, and also to

themselves. And in the instance of student learning narratives in a social justice course,

students are not only concerned with presenting a positive image of themselves as

learners but also of themselves as good and ethical people. Maynes et al. (2008) say, as

oral historians and other collectors of life stories have demonstrated, sometimes what is

learned from narrative research challenges the official story. This was true of my analysis.

Using Riessman's (2008) dialogic/performance narrative analysis allowed me to consider that *weaker* final papers might indicate a rhetorical learning resistance that protects the student-participant from the epistemic challenges of the Feminist-Humanities model. And perhaps this resistance offers important lessons about how students process the model's pedagogical inventions, and how their social identities are implicated in this process. This insight paved the way for my most important findings. In chapter five I present my analysis of three student-participants who demonstrate rhetorical resistance in their final papers. Each of the three illustrate, but in very different ways, the importance of taking account of social location and other aspects of positionality when interpreting data. It is a fundamental element of feminist theory that positionality inheres in significant, fascinating, and often messy and contradictory ways; this is also true in feminist research. Thus, feminist narrative analysis allowed me to trace contextual, positional, and identity group influences through and across student writing to consider how students' "strategic ends" (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 60) operated in their final papers, and how the ideologies and *ventriloquation* (Bakhtin, 1981) of the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) surfaced through their language choices. Narrative analysis highlights the subjective and interpretive nature of language, and students' words were doing important *work* (Ahmed, 2004a), as they grappled with the challenges of the epistemic project.

My struggles to interpret their data also created analytic challenges. Recognizing that there are many stories of the data I could tell often made me feel unable to tell any

stories at all. I felt the weight of each choice at each level of analysis, interpretation, and representation, where each decision felt like a stand-in for other possibilities. It is difficult to grasp at always-shifting ground. Two scholars were especially helpful in pointing a way forward: Riessman's (1993) discussion of validity, and Gordon's (1997) statement that investigations of complex personhood "…constitute less a scientifically positive project than a cultural practice that organizes particular rituals of storytelling told by situated investigators" (p. 10). As Gordon (1997) consistently demonstrates, what sounds simple can also be profound and revelatory. In keeping with postpositivist realism, the subjective contingency of interpretation does not preclude the usefulness of one interpretation, one story. And, as Riessman makes clear, the research report is a work of craft. There were other possibilities within my research choices, and other stories I could tell of the data. It took me a while to recognize this did not diminish my contributions.

As a first-time investigator, I have taken care to present a coherent and hopefully persuasive (Riessman, 1993) argument, supported with student-participant evidence, in a carefully considered research report that adheres to investigative standards of qualitative research as well as the aims and values of feminist pedagogy, the humanities ways of knowing, and feminist narrative analysis. I have taken care to recognize and respect the *complex personhood* (Gordon, 1997) of student-participants, as well as my own. Like the stories told by student-participants, the story I tell of the data is my construction. However, it draws on many years of teaching in general, teaching this course specifically, studying feminist theory, and practicing feminist pedagogy. Through this

scholarship, I offer an additional perspective in an ongoing dialogue in the field of social justice education.

My Analysis

Through close reading of students' first and final reflexive writing assignments and transcripts of their focus group conversations, I created an organizational structure inspired by Brown (1999) to investigate if and how students were moved by the pedagogical interventions of Feminist-Humanities model. I identified breaks from neoliberal discourses, steps forward and backward, revelations and contradictions, *sticky* words (Ahmed, 2004a), indications students had taken up the language of analysis taught through the curricular model, and considered the ways students' social identities interacted with their learning. In short, feminist narrative analysis allowed me to illuminate the variety of ways students wrestled with new knowledge. Attending to the *complex personhood* (Gordon, 1997) of student-participants was an authentic way to examine the messy learning process within a course that asks students to question what they think they know. My analysis also demanded that I question what I thought I knew about student learning.

Feminist narrative analysis required that I give attention to multiple layers within student writing, as well as the language used in their writing prompts, and the fact that their writings were collected as graded assignments in a college course (Gordon, 1997; Maynes et al., 2008; Riessman 1993); Brown's (1999) *listenings* were especially useful in this process. Additionally, as historian Susan Geiger says (as cited in Maynes et al., 2008), I had to take account of "...(1) *how* they have come to know what they know and (2) *where* they are situated in the act of creating knowledge" (p. 99, emphasis in

105

original). I also needed to ask, as Maynes et al. (2008) say, if the "narrator and analyst are speaking the same language; that is, the extent to which the concerns and uses of implicit or explicit categories of analysis are shared and how this matters" (p. 100). Since I read student narratives first as an instructor and then as a researcher, and since these writings were graded assignments for college credit, this positionality influenced their use of language and my interpretation of it. And students were aware that their focus group conversations were being taped and would be used as data for this investigation. Narrative analysis offered a way to examine each of these layers discretely while also viewing them in concert within the interpretive process.

Reflexive learning narratives proved to be a robust source of information from which to ask if and how students' perspectives shifted (Fisher, 2001) or evolved over the semester. And Riessman's (2008) dialogic/performance narrative analysis was useful for asking questions such as: How do students describe their world? How do they position themselves in relation to others? In what ways can I detect changes in their positioning over the course of the semester? How do students interact, interpret, and converse with course texts, discussions, and activities? Do they take up the language of analysis provided through the Feminist-Humanities model? Can I locate the influence of the model's aims to disrupt student expectations and shift their attention through its examinations of knowledge, identity, intersectionality, structure, power, language, and affect?

While Brown's (1999) model was generative as a comprehensive analytic approach, it was not a perfect fit for the aims of this investigation. I began my analysis with close readings of each pair of *Who Am I*? papers (first and final), making notes in the

106

margins and highlighting words, phrases, and sentences that recurred or otherwise struck me as significant or *sticky* (Ahmed, 2004a). In particular, I marked mentions of specific course materials to track which ones students discussed and how they described their impact. I looked for times when students took up the language of analysis of the Feminist-Humanities model. I looked for *sticky* words and the affect they carried (Ahmed, 2004a). I examined how students used definitions, questions, and metaphors (Postman, 1996). I looked for breaks in moral neutrality (Noddings, 2007), and breaks in neoliberal discourse that signaled human connection (Noddings, 2007) and recognition of their role for creating change (Johnson, 2001). Reading each pair of papers back-to-back let me think deeply about where each student was at the beginning of the semester, where they were at the end, and what happened in between. But I needed to capture more of my reflections, as Brown had done with her notes in the margins of the transcripts. Since my focus is on narrative, I created detailed portraits for each of the twenty-four student-participants. This generated greater insights about individual students and the evolution of their learning, while also helping me recognize the ways I continued to view students from an instructor perspective. My evaluative language in these portraits caught my attention only as I read through the completed collection. I still needed to shift my attention to what student learning narratives could tell me.

In the next phase of analysis, I used the individual portraits to identify patterns and connections among and across student-participants. This is where I moved more fully into researcher mode. Moving beyond a focus on individual student growth allowed me to stand back and view the larger landscape of student writing. I was then able to identify patterns: significant insights and the course materials that brought them about, emotional

reactions to specific materials and classroom discussions, recurring *sticky* words (Ahmed, 2004a), uses of the model's language of analysis, and variations on these patterns. Then, my teacher/researcher journal let me look back at how I described the moments that had resonated with students. My journal was not as useful as I had expected. I think this is again largely because I wrote the entries more as an instructor reflecting on my teaching practice and not yet fully as an observational researcher looking more broadly at student learning. However, student narratives alongside the thick descriptions in my journal allowed me to identify three significant *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001).

Three shifts in attention

To ask questions about student learning, I returned to my opening analogy. If students at the end of this epistemic project are similar to the animals at the end of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, having learned more accurately their social conditions, then: *Has the Feminist-Humanities model built students' capacity for change by providing them with the tools they need to move forward differently?*

My analysis demonstrates strong support for the pedagogical potency of Fisher's (2001) *shifts in attention*. On the surface, shifts may appear subtle, but they can create cracks through students' previously held assumptions and narrow perspectives, opening them up to new possibilities (Ahmed, 2004b). Although they may begin as hairline fractures, shifts can reverberate over the semester to become significant fault lines. And, if the shifts are *sticky* (Ahmed, 2004a), they may continue to reverberate long after the course is complete. I identified three analytic shifts in attention connected to the model's curricular goals. The first occurs when students challenge and reframe the assumptions they brought to the course; the second when they add analyses of structure and power to

their new knowledge; and the third when they engage an affective analysis by connecting affect and cognition. With each shift, the ground opens more, as students complicated their understanding of the ways the individual and the social intersect and collide. My analysis suggests the shifts are key to the success of the Feminist-Humanities model. They surprise students, help them look differently at what they think they know well, and invoke their imaginations to consider what the world could be with their effort (Ahmed, 2004b). Ahmed says (2004b) surprise is a precursor for wonder, and surprise and wonder are the building blocks of transformational learning. As Ahmed (2004b) describes it, "What is ordinary, familiar or usual often resists being perceived by consciousness" (p. 179). Or as Judith Lorber (1994) states, it takes a "deliberate disruption of our expectations" to notice what we see as familiar, what has been normalized, accepted as unquestioned, viewed as inevitable (p. 112). My analysis suggests these shifts are the strongest teaching tool of the model, the greatest revelation of this investigation, and the most important contribution of the Feminist-Humanities model to the field of social justice education.

The three shifts correspond to the major categories of the Feminist-Humanities model.[64] They are moments when students: 1) take up the epistemic project to interrogate their knowledge and assumptions, entering a critically reflective mode of learning (Fricker, 2007); 2) take up a structural analysis that leads them to recognize the ways individuals navigate the social hierarchies and power relations that organize and sort them; and 3) when affective analysis leads them to recognize the *somethings-to-be-done* (Gordon, 1997). As Gordon (1997) describes it, the first shift is about adding *texture*,

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[64] See Appendix D for course syllabus.

nuance, and *density* to what was previously seen as simple or given, encouraging students to complicate and problematize their knowledge; in her language, this allows students to recognize that *life is complicated* and there is a wealth of social information that was previously invisible to them.[65] The second shift makes visible the gears, the mechanisms behind what before simply was; Gordon (1997) refers to this as *the things-behind-the-things* [p. ix], when the interaction of the individual and the social are revealed. Finally, in the third shift, students achieve *transformative recognition*, as affective analysis makes visible the ghosts who demand action.

The three shifts have a loose sequential progression. My analysis, like Gordon's (1997) epistemic project, supports the argument that one must question the origins and processes of knowledge development to prepare to interrogate power hierarchies, and these two levels of interrogation are each necessary groundwork to fully engage an affective analysis that connects head and heart in the thrust of empathetic understanding that demands change. For purposes of organization and to allow for depth of analysis, I examined each shift discretely. However, because learning is messy, contradictory, and nonlinear, takes steps forward and back, my organization is imperfect; however, it allowed me to closely examine the work occurring within each shift.

Importantly, feminist narrative analysis allowed me to interrogate students' struggles to learn. Only a handful of students made it through each of the three shifts. Many stall after shift one, achieving only a slightly expanded view of our social landscape and their place in it. And, as I illustrate in chapters four and five, all too often a

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[65] Although I identified these shifts without consciously considering it, after rereading Gordon's (1997) introduction following my initial analysis, I found parallels within the epistemic project she describes and the shifts I detected; for this reason, I use her terminology.

hard-won insight is negated in the next sentence or later in their paper, as neoliberal discourses exert their pull, and as students' work to resolve cognitive dissonance and justify their further inaction. Awareness does not automatically lead to the acceptance of social responsibility. I had to recognize the work going on beneath students' rhetorical moves, the performances and other face-saving devices, to elucidate the messy complexities of their learning. I also had to keep in mind that students submitted their papers for a course grade. Although I spent time throughout the semester cultivating and nurturing open exploration and ensuring that students understood their honesty would not negatively impact their grade, some revelations are too painful for students to admit, even to themselves. And students always worry about their grades because they matter for their academic progress. This is not a pass/fail course; thus, there is only so much I could do to keep students from focusing on their final grade when their learning occurs within a grade-focused neoliberal system of education.

Out of the twenty-four students in this investigation, twenty-one demonstrate evidence of the first shift, to a greater or lesser degree. In chapter five, I look separately at the three remaining students, as each represents an interesting case study. Their resistance to the learning project illustrates some of the ways a complex person experiences a social justice course and how their learning is intertwined with their social identities. Seventeen students achieve a structural analysis, and ten move into affective analysis. For those who take up the second and/or third shift, their capacity for change sits on firmer ground. They are more likely to break from moral neutrality and neoliberal conditioning to recognize that unless they take active steps against inequities, they continue to support oppressive systems founded and maintained through hierarchies of power.

Reconnecting to Lived Experience: "Closing the Aerial Distance" (Martin, 2000)

Jane Roland Martin (2000) describes the challenges women have faced since gaining a presence and some level of recognition in the academy. She speaks of the *aerial distance*, a term she borrows from novelist George Eliot, between academic researchers and the lives they investigate. From this distance, it is possible to recognize cultural patterns and social issues, but it can be difficult to see what is happening on the ground. Martin says women of the academy are distanced by language and from both the personal and work experiences of other women. This distance can lead to blind spots. She goes further to say, "The languages of the academy also place its speakers at an aerial distance from the world's ills" (p. 28). She references Carol Cohn's (1987) discussion about learning to speak *technostrategic* so she could communicate with intellectuals in the defense field who are responsible for U.S. nuclear policy. Cohn quickly came to see how this new language altered and controlled her cognitive landscape. It changed what she thought and how she thought about it, reminiscent of Riessman's (1993) discussion of her walk on the beach in South India described earlier in this chapter. *Technostrategic* created an aerial distance from "the very issues that had driven her to learn it in the first place: peace, human death, the destruction of human societies" (as quoted in Martin, 2000, p. 28).

My aim has been to close the aerial distance between the student-participants and me, the researcher. And narrative analysis of student learning narratives mediated the distance, connecting me to students' struggles for knowledge. And a specifically feminist approach to narrative analysis further mediated the distance through its attention to context, students' *complex personhood* (Gordon, 1997), and the affect of learning. As

Maynes et al. (2008) suggest, what I learned frequently surprised me, especially as I transitioned from teacher to researcher, and as I became more attentive to the available information and more adept at moving between the students' on-the-ground struggle to learn and my struggle to interpret their learning. As such, feminist narrative analysis was an elegant way to closely examine the course experience of individual, socially-positioned students within their larger learning landscape. As I describe in the chapters that follow, viewing the individual and the social both discretely and in concert led me to identify important elements that can inform stronger curricular approaches to social justice education.

CHAPTER FOUR: Shifting Attention

To close the *aerial distance* (Martin, 2000) and bring me closer to students' on-the-ground learning process, I used feminist narrative analysis to examine three data sources for this investigation of the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model on student learning. They are: 1) the first and final reflexive writing assignments of each student-participant, 2) transcripts of an end-of-semester focus group to gather students' feedback on their course learning experiences, and 3) my teacher/researcher journal.[66] Students' first papers captured their pre-course knowledge, and their final learning analyzes and focus group transcripts each provided different access points into students' struggles to learn, as they ascribed meaning to new knowledge developed through the pedagogical interventions of the Feminist-Humanities model.[67] And my teacher/researcher journal added a participant-observer perspective and my reflections on classroom dynamics.

I used Catherine Kohler Riessman's (2008) dialogic/performance narrative analysis methodology to analyze these data sources. As detailed in chapter three, narrative analysis uses analytic tools with origins in literary theory, such as identifying patterns, word choices, sentence structure, and sequencing. And my feminist approach added analyzes of power, positionality, identity, and other social constructs as they interact within the learning process. Dialogic/performance narrative analysis additionally

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[66] See chapter one for greater detail on these data sources.

[67] Two additional notes are useful for understanding how I present evidence from the end-of-semester focus group in this chapter and chapter five. First, the focus group instructions asked students to say their name before they responded to a question. Only about half of the participants have done so. I have only noted the name (pseudonym) of the student-participant if they have self-identified. Although from the tapes and the list of attendees, it may be possible to identify all or most of the speakers, I have chosen not to because I cannot confirm my decisions. For those who have not self-identified, I have marked them as "Speaker" and their number as it corresponds to the transcript. Second, it is important to note that all speakers during the focus group—through self-identification or context clues for those who do not self-identify—are women. A few of the male student-participants attended the focus group; however, they do not speak on tape.

highlights audience and narrator performance as significant analytic elements, which allowed me to interrogate both learner and social identity performance within students' reflexive narratives. Through these analytic methodologies, I have identified three *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001) that indicate students have been *moved* (Ahmed, 2004b; Riessman, 1993)[68] by the Feminist-Humanities curricular model. In this chapter and the next I present my interpretations of what these *shifts in attention* suggest about the model's impact on student learning in a one-semester, undergraduate general education social justice course.

As established in chapter two, the model aims to disrupt students' course expectations, heighten their awareness, and encourage students to view course concepts from new perspectives by using its analytic tools. To achieve these goals, the components of the model guide students to ask questions about what they think they know, take account of information they have missed, and, in light of this new information, reconsider their relationship to the social world, its structures and power relations. This chapter presents and discusses evidence of the first two shifts. In shift one, students expand their view of our social landscape to take in information that was previously outside their field of vision, information that often challenges their most basic assumptions. In this shift, students enter a critically reflective mode of learning (Fricker, 2007) as they come to recognize that *life is complicated* (Gordon, 1997), and there is a great deal more happening around them than they previously noticed. Then in shift two, students recognize the social structures and power relations that organize how we come to know

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[68] I am speaking specifically of Ahmed's (2004b) use of *move*, which she writes, "comes from the Latin, *emovere*, referring to 'to move, to move out'" (p. 11, emphasis in original), thus, indicating a move outward. See also Riessman (1993) in her discussion of Burke (1950), in which *move* connotes taking action (as discussed in Riessman, 1993, p. 21).

and what we experience as true; or as Gordon (1997) describes it, shift two is where students recognize *the things-behind-the-things*. Through shift two students learn to recognize the indelible link between individual complex persons (Gordon, 1997) and the social structures that organize and sort them, as well as the inherent tensions that occur when individuals and structures collide.

To evaluate the model's pedagogical interventions, I note the course activities and materials student-participants described as catalyzing the shifts. In reality, the shifts are fluid, blending and blurring as students wrestle with complex and challenging material. I address this back and forth, as well. Pulling the shifts apart for analytic purposes is a necessary but artificial process; however, it also provides a deeper understanding of the workings within each shift. My findings offer clues about the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model on student learning as well as useful lessons about the student learning experience that can inform ever stronger curricular models and teaching strategies for social justice education.

It is important to note that students' final papers and the focus group transcripts are learning documents. Within these writings and conversations, students continue to learn, make connections, ascribe meaning, and extend their learning. Both sets of documents are integral to the ongoing reflexive process. The majority of students who demonstrate shift one will also demonstrate shift two, at least to some degree, and a few will go on to demonstrate evidence of shift three.[69] The aim of this investigation was to examine the model's impact by identifying the pedagogical moments and teaching strategies that led to collective shifts. Thus, I have organized my discussion around the

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[69] I discuss shift three in chapter five.

work occurring within each shift. Some students fully embrace a shift, while others actively retreat from it. And many students move back and forth, embracing a shift and then walking back from it. However, each shift represents a significant learning moment. I speak specifically to the conditions that appear to catalyze each shift as well as the learning barriers I have identified.

1. **Shift One: A Critically Reflective Mode of Learning (Fricker, 2007)**

In shift one, students look around at a once-familiar landscape to find there is more happening around them than they previously recognized. Shift one complicates their pre-course knowledge. This can be unmooring, and students' initial moves to reckon with this new information can be tentative. Their awareness heightened by course materials, students look anew at their social interactions, relationships, assumptions, and language choices. And they try out the language of analysis presented through the Feminist-Humanities model to explore why people hold differing perspectives and experience the world in different ways.

This is one of the defining elements of the Feminist-Humanities model, setting it apart from common approaches to diversity education. Through its epistemic project, the model guides students to ask questions about the ways their identities inform their choices and experiences, and how their choices and experiences while navigating the social world determine what they experience as real. Through the interrogation captured in their first and final reflexive writing assignments, student-participants describe their insights about the ways their socialization has limited their worldview. In the words of Avery Gordon (1997), shift one adds the *texture*, *nuance*, and *density* necessary for students to challenge the accuracy of their assumptions. As I demonstrate below, the tools

117

of language analysis are indispensable for creating the conditions for this *shift in attention* (Fisher, 2001). In particular, using definitions, questions, and metaphors (Postman, 1996) and guiding students to recognize the *work* of words (Ahmed, 2004a) challenge students' taken for granted norms and assumptions (Ahmed, 2004a; Gordon, 1997; Lorber, 1994).

Twenty-one of the twenty-four student-participants provide evidence that the pedagogical interventions of the Feminist-Humanities model have moved them into a critically reflective mode of learning (Fricker, 2007). In a 15-week course, the significance of this outcome should not be underestimated. Through this shift students demonstrate a growing ability to reflect on their socialization and language choices and how they inform their assumptions about unfamiliar others and the operations of our social world. Within shift one, students come to recognize that exploring other perspectives not only shows us how others experience the world differently, but it also reflects back to us new information about our own life experiences. The moves within shift one may appear small; however, they surprise students,[70] disrupt their pre-course knowledge, and create an energy that propels them into the epistemic project. The stereotyping activity from the first class session and the camera lens metaphor introduced during the second class session each appear to have catalyzed a critically reflective mode of learning.

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[70] For Ahmed (2004) surprise is a precursor to *wonder*. See discussion in chapter two for a detailed discussion of Ahmed's concept of *wonder* and its significance for the Feminist-Humanities model.

Stereotyping Activity[71]

The first day of class *stereotyping* activity[72] is designed to intentionally disrupt student expectations of what the course will be. It kicks off an excavation of the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007), guiding students to recognize that the *images in our heads* (Anzaldúa, 2013/1992) have real world impacts on our social interactions. Through this exercise, students examine their automatic social processes to illuminate the ways they inform both what they see and how they interpret what they see. For many, the reverberations of this activity are felt throughout the course, as evidenced in their final papers, whether explicitly or implicitly. As such this activity is emblematic of shift one, as students move into critical reflection; importantly, it does so on the first day of class. Students describe the exercise as "uncomfortable" or "awkward." However, this tension also heightens students' awareness and prepares them to sit with the discomfort of the epistemic project. In her final learning analysis, Erin, who identifies as a white woman, writes about this exercise:

> [Writing] This [final] paper has also made me think a lot about the first assignment we did in class. Every single question I answered was a stereotype. What made the assignment real was getting the chance to talk to that individual after I answered all of the questions. It made me realize how wrong I was and that judging a person off of first looks just puts inaccurate thoughts into your mind. At the end of the day I don't believe anyone can control what they think when they first see a person, I just wish that people, including myself wouldn't constantly let

[71] See chapter two for a detailed description of this activity from my teacher/researcher journal.
[72] It is important to note that I did not describe this as a *stereotyping* activity until after students had completed the exercise. Therefore, this terminology did not influence their reliance on stereotypical descriptions of their assigned partner.

119

first impressions or the looks of someone identify who they are to you before you

personally get to know them. (Erin, final paper)

Erin describes the importance of reserving judgment, which Fricker (2007) says is an

essential corrective for the *testimonial injustice*[73] that derives from the *credibility deficit*

created by *identity prejudice*. Erin is questioning how she views others, interrogating how

first impressions can be wrong, and how these automatic impressions impact her social

interactions. Madison, who identifies as a white woman, also gets at the practice of

reserving judgment in her final paper. She tells the story of an African American

roommate who "perfectly fit" the stereotype of what she expected from her. Madison

writes:

She was rude, constantly loud, messy, did not smell so great, and talked with a

form of English that I could barely understand [something Madison refers to

earlier in her paper as "ghetto-speak"]. Oftentimes she would use my things

without asking and leave them dirty for days. (Madison, final paper)

These two sentences are filled with racially-coded language and a clear indication of

identity prejudice (Fricker, 2007). Madison follows them saying:

This class in particular however has taught me many of the ideas I have in my

mind are wrong…Because of these preconceived ideas, I never gave [my

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[73] According to Fricker (2007), *testimonial injustice* occurs when a hearer discounts a person's credibility as a knower based on *identity prejudice*. In her first chapter, Fricker explores her concept of *testimonial injustice* through Anthony Minghella's screenplay for *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and the way Herbert Greenleaf ignores Marge Sherwood's suspicions that Tom Ripley is involved with his son Dickie's disappearance. Mr. Greenleaf takes exception to Sherwood's information because he views her *female intuition* as an easily discounted form of knowledge antithetical to *facts*. As such, Greenleaf ignores Sherwood's intuition because of his prejudice and thus misses that Ripley has in fact murdered his son.

roommate] a real chance to show me who she was as a person. (Madison, final

paper)

Like Erin, Madison indicates she now recognizes how learned stereotypes have informed

her perceptions and interactions and how reserving judgment can provide her with the

space to correct the inaccuracies of prejudice.

In her final paper, Catherine, who identifies as a mixed race woman, uses this

activity to explore gendered stereotypes. When discussing the influence of the media in

her life, she makes an illuminating statement about her social conditioning. She writes:

When we completed the stereotyping exercise on the first day of class, we had to

answer questions about our professor. I wrote down that she seems really caring

and sweet, and this is probably why she is a teacher. Would I have written that if

it was a man professor? Why does she have to be caring just because she is a

woman and a teacher? (Catherine, final paper)

Catherine notices her ventriloquation[74] of learned gender stereotypes and asks useful

questions about how they inform her perceptions. This is significant for Catherine

because, during a class discussion early in the semester, she took exception to the idea

that gendered stereotypes could limit the ways we define ourselves or what we think we

can do, particularly around career choices. While I did not capture this in detail in my

teacher/researcher journal, I recall that when discussing her reaction to a reading about

the paucity of women in STEM fields (Vedantam, 2013), Catherine stated that women do

not choose careers in math and science because they are "boring" and not because of

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[74] See chapter three for a detailed discussion of Bakhtin's (1981, English translation) concept of
ventriloquation.

gendered expectations and norms. Therefore, these questions in her final paper hold greater importance for demonstrating her shifting consciousness.

About the stereotyping exercise, Allison, who identifies as a white woman, writes:

I really have learned from the assumptions that I made on the first day of class...The stereotyping exercise that the class completed on the first day really opened my eyes to how judgmental of a culture America is, and how Americans tend to make assumptions off of how someone looks. This bothers me a lot, because I always tell myself and others that I do not judge others based on how they live [look?]; this exercise confirmed that I do in fact judge others before I know anything about them. This exercise also shows how ignorant my thinking was in the beginning of the semester. I am thankful to say that I have now expanded my thinking, and I do try my hardest to not have these stereotypical and judgmental thoughts enter my mind. This semester has opened my mind to explore how individuals differ in regards to race, gender, and social class.

(Allison, final paper)

Allison begins with a statement about American culture, then recognizes the ways prejudice also influences her judgments. By employing a *reflective pause* (Fricker, 2007) in her final paper she recognizes this influence and faces a difficult truth about herself. This awareness may make her more willing to correct for *identity prejudice* (Fricker, 2007) going forward.

Conversations during the focus group provide further and often more compelling insights into the ways this activity impacted student learning. Each of the four students in Focus Group Three uses the word "uncomfortable" to describe the activity. However,

they also describe how this discomfort created a shift in attention that readied them for what was to come. Because participants are interacting in the focus group, these conversations often extend what they have written in their final papers. Taylor, who identifies as a white woman, says: "Um, I think it got me, like, ready to know…to be on your toes and be ready for what, like, this class was going to be about." Erin agrees saying:

> Um…when she [Rachel, the instructor] first asked us to do that game, I felt a little
>
> uncomfortable. Um, I had no idea why we were doing it, but now that the
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> semester's over, um…it really challenged, it was the beginning of a challenging
>
> semester of uncomfortable questions. And that was just the beginning. (Erin,
>
> focus group)

And Molly, who identifies as a Korean American woman, says:

> I guess when we first started the exercise, like, I was really uncomfortable and
>
> really nervous because I went into this class thinking we were just going to be
>
> sitting and listening to someone lecture. So it really prepared me to actually have
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> to interact in the class and participate. (Molly, focus group)

Erin's and Molly's statements highlight the effectiveness of this experiential activity for setting the stage for active learning and a deeper engagement with course material.

Similarly, Focus Group One used the word "awkward" to describe the exercise. Leah, who identifies as a white woman, makes a strong statement saying:

> I think it definitely was a necessary part of the course, even though it was really
>
> awkward in the beginning. Because, I think I said this in class one time, but it

123

made us have to acknowledge the fact that we are part of it, too. And we can't

separate ourselves from all the stuff going on. (Leah, focus group)

Here Leah recognizes that she is implicated in stereotypical thinking and its real world

impacts. Speaker 5, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, agrees

saying:

No, it definitely set the tone for the course. It showed how, I don't want to say

blunt, but how we needed to actually sit down, talk about race, class, and gender

and all the stereotypes so that we can put it all on the table so that we can

understand all of it. And I feel like that was the best way to do it: just go. (Speaker

5, focus group)

"Just go" is an apt descriptor for how this exercise propels students into the epistemic

project, and Erin's recognition that talking about oppression is essential to understanding

it is an important learning moment. In Focus Group Two, Speaker 13, who from context

clues likely identifies as a white woman, demonstrates this by saying, "So I think it

definitely challenged what I already knew about gender, race, social class, and everything

else." And Speaker 12, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, says,

"…I guess it kind of made us more open-minded. And let us be able to talk more without

feeling, I guess, judged and stuff like that. You weren't scared to speak after that, I don't

think." Speaker 11, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, agrees

and says, "I feel like it kind of made you more, almost open and comfortable within

yourself." Speaker 11 continues to talk about the discomfort, then says, "…I was just

like, 'I hate this assignment.' But then, later on you kind of realize why you thought what

you thought and how it kind of plays into it."

This activity demonstrates how we subconsciously impose stereotypes on others and the limitations of this shorthand. From the student evidence it is clear that examining their automatic social processes—their *credibility deficits* and how they influence their perceptions and create *identity prejudice* (Fricker, 2007)—prepared students to embrace the discomfort inherent in a course that explores social inequity and our participation in the systems that maintain it. And Speaker 5's use of the term "just go" is telling. Even though students talk about the discomfort, the *shift in attention* (Fisher, 2001) it creates not only laid an important foundation for the course, but from the evidence of my teacher/researcher journal,[75] it also broke through the uncomfortable silence that often occurs on the first day of class to facilitate a robust discussion about stereotypes: why we have them, how we use them, and how they shape our social interactions. This provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of using this or a similar activity on the first day of class to kick off an examination of the images of our *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) to prepare students for the challenges of interrogating knowledge.

The Camera Lens Metaphor

In the second class session, I introduced a camera lens metaphor as a descriptor for how we view the world, a view that is different for each of us based on our identities and socialization.[76] I explained that in this course we will pull back the camera lens for a larger view of our social landscape, making visible what has been going on just outside our field of vision.[77] This in turn allows us to look for larger patterns and connections.

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[75] As discussed in chapter two.

[76] The metaphor is intended as an explanatory concept for the less concrete concepts of ideology and worldview.

[77] See chapter two for a more detailed description of the camera lens metaphor and how I used it in class.

Several students take up this *sticky* (Ahmed, 2004a) metaphor in their final papers, giving weight to its strength as a learning tool.

Students often use the words *view* or *perspective* when writing about their expanding lens. Michelle, who identifies as a Black woman, writes:

> Finally, throughout the course of the semester, my assumptions, views, behaviors, etc. have been challenged and my perspective has expanded as a result of stripping apart socially constructed institutions and viewing them through a lens of social justice. Individually, I'll [sic] learned that a lot of my views and actions were indeed a result of some of these socially constructed and limiting stereotypes concerning race, class, and gender. However, upon 'making the strange familiar, and making the unfamiliar strange,'[78] I can make individual and collective strides toward reaching social justice in my home, school, community, etc. (Michelle, final paper)

In this quotation, Michelle engages the language of analysis of the Feminist-Humanities model. The camera lens metaphor gives her a way to describe her expanding field of vision. And word choices like "challenged" and "expanded" and "stripping apart" describe her learning process. And phrases such as "lens of social justice" and "collective strides" point a way forward, as she integrates her new knowledge and considers how she might act on it.

Hallie, who identifies as a white woman, opens her final paper in a modestly remarkable style. She writes:

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[78] Michelle is referencing Spiro's (1990) concept of *making the familiar strange, and the strange familiar* as a framing device for stepping outside our experiences to examine them with fresh eyes. This concept was also introduced in the second class session.

On my first day in this class, I had very strong beliefs about myself and the world. I didn't think that my gender, social status, or race stopped me from accomplishing my goals. Throughout the semester, my ideas have been challenged, and I have learned a lot about myself and others. The articles, books, and movies that we've analyzed in class have brought many new perspectives to my attention that I hadn't previously considered, and I have matured in my thoughts. (Hallie, final paper)

Again, in shift one, small moves can be significant. Hallie is listening to the *multilogue* (Gorelick, 1996/1991) built through class materials. She speaks of her expanding lens and the way the class materials have "challenged" her preconceived notions.

About the camera lens metaphor, Allison writes:

The most important concept I have learned was when we discussed our lens of our experience, what we have been taught, learned, and observed, as well as societal norms…my lenses were narrow at the beginning of the semester, but are expanding every time that I learn something new. (Allison, final paper)

Allison's language suggests she is engaging with the epistemic challenge. And she writes specifically about the social constructs she has learned, reflecting her ongoing examination of her socialization. Here she is getting at the influence of the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007), although this explanatory concept was not introduced in class. Importantly, she suggests her journey will continue.

At the end of her final paper, Nia, who identifies as a Black woman, refers to the impact on her lens. She reports that the class was not what she had expected. She writes:

127

Before taking this class I thought no one is going to be able to change my mind on

how I see our diverse society in America. I can be stubborn at times and not open

minded so coming to this class I thought it would be more of a lecture type where

the professor mostly taught us with PowerPoints, and assigning many

readings…As of now I can see myself fitting into the larger social structures in

our culture by using the tools I am giving [sic], and trying to reach for a better life

for myself, and my family. (Nia, final paper)

Nia suggests a more interactive course approach has disrupted her stubbornness, and, as a

result, she is developing a more open mind and a larger social context. While Nia focuses

on her individual learning, she is beginning to recognize how her experience connects to

a larger social landscape.

From these student responses, it is clear the camera lens metaphor was a useful

explanatory concept. This provides evidence for Postman's (1996) statement that

metaphors allow us to examine our most basic assumptions as they challenge us to see

from new perspectives.[79] This metaphor gave students a concrete image through which to

look for and consider new social information. As demonstrated above, what they often

recognized was new information about themselves. In shift one, student-participants also

began to recognize the constructs within their socialization and how they have informed

what they know about the world and shaped their knowledge of others such as, as Allison

describes it in her final paper (quoted above), "...what we have been taught, learned, and

observed, as well as societal norms." In the next section I provide evidence that the

automatic social processes activity and the camera lens metaphor have prepared students

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[79] See chapter two for a detailed discussion of this concept in Postman (1996).

to reexamine their socialization and detect its influence on what they have noticed and experienced as real. This examination allows them to identify some of the blind spots in their social knowledge.

Reconsidering their Socialization

As they shift into reflective mode, student-participants look around with new eyes and reconsider what they previously took for granted. In their final papers and the focus group conversations, student-participants shared specific insights developed through the course about their socialization and how it has shaped their views. In particular from the white-identified students, there is a common recognition of their insular perspective based on the environment where they grew up. For example, Leah, who identifies as a white woman, writes in her first paper that she grew up in a gated community near the water in Brooklyn, New York that has one of the largest Irish American populations in the country. She writes that a person needs three letters of reference from community members to apply to move into the community. While she describes her family as Italian American rather than Irish American, Leah writes that the community lacks diversity, and she now recognizes how the required letters keep it this way. She writes:

> Though I do love my community, I feel as though it has made me closed minded. I never had many opportunities to meet people of different races or classes until later in life. Although I am kind to all people of different races and classes, I have found that because of this, I formed my own prejudices based off of what I heard in the news or television. This affects the way I view a neighborhood unlike mine to this day. For example, when driving through the streets of [a nearby urban area] I automatically lock my car doors out of instinct. Additionally, sometimes I pass

judgements on people of different races, either thinking they were wealthy or

poor. (Leah, final paper)

Like so many other statements that indicate this first shift, this may appear to be a small

revelation; however, it does a great deal of work. Leah has recognized that the lack of

diversity in her community is intentional and has shaped her early experiences and

limited her knowledge of those with different social identities and life experiences. And

her use of the word "instinct" is important, as she challenges her automatic social

processes and what they mean for how she interacts in the world. Notably, she also

acknowledged that being kind is not enough to create equitable interactions or disrupt

inequitable structures. In this handful of sentences, Leah demonstrates critical and

analytic depth and the *reflective pause* Fricker (2007) describes as an essential tool to

correct the *identity prejudice* that inheres from our automatic social processes.

Elaine wrestles with a similar insight. She writes:

I am a white female from an upper middle class family. The world around me was

mostly white, upper middle class. I had hardworking parents and supportive

grandparents. I grew up in a cozy home, stocked with everything I needed. All

around me, there were lots of places to explore. I assumed everyone lived this

way…It has become apparent my identity groups have influenced who I am

today. Prior to taking this class, I did not think about my identity. I did not realize

how much of my values, behaviors, and feelings toward others are determined by

the identity groups I associate with. (Elaine, final paper)

This is a bold opening paragraph for her final paper, where Elaine describes her insular,

privileged view. She shifts her attention to examine her socialization and how it has built

her worldview, now recognizing that she cannot accurately understand the lives of others when viewing them from her own perspective. The realization that not everyone lives as she does is a reflective statement that prepares her to reserve judgment in her interactions and perhaps to listen more carefully to the knowledge others have to offer, thus reducing *credibility deficit* (Fricker, 2007). While her phrasing around her "hardworking parents and supportive grandparents" hints at judgment about the values and behaviors of other parents and grandparents, she is recognizing a larger social landscape and wrestling with new and challenging knowledge; moves back and forth, especially as students reconsider the neoliberal discourses of our *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) are expected, as I discuss in detail below.

Madison also shifts into reflective mode to examine how her privileged perspective limits her recognition of different life experiences. She writes that her family "is solely from European descent," her "friends growing up were white," and her only real interaction with someone who is non-white was with her African American nanny, all of which has led her "towards a white mindset." Through her interactions with course material, she has begun to ask questions about this mindset and its impact. She writes:

> Shouldn't we all have the same perspective? However, I now see that the position
> I view the world from is only one of many perspectives…My eyes see only what I
> want them to see, the perspective of an upper middle class white female…This
> concept is one I never understood fully before entering this class at the beginning
> of the semester. (Madison, final paper)

Madison's statement that hers is but "one of many perspectives" prepares her to look beyond stereotypes and reserve judgment so she may learn from others. This is what she

131

is *reaching toward* (Gordon, 1997) in these sentences. Madison also pushes against the limitations and narrow perspectives of her socialization. She writes:

> [Our class] has really opened my eyes even wider to things in my everyday life that for years have bothered me, but I wasn't really able to put my finger on as to why. This class has allowed me to see myself and know who I am better than ever before. (Madison, final paper)

The pedagogical interventions of the Feminist-Humanities model have given Madison a language to describe and examine her life experiences. Later in this chapter I will describe something similar in shift two from several of the student-participants who are women around the social construction of gender and the usefulness of the analytic language for describing their experiences.

Through looking more closely at the features and conditions of their socialization, students reckon with the ways their social locations have shaped their knowledge of the world and unfamiliar others by limiting their social interactions to those like themselves. The outline of the stereotyping activity can be seen beneath their insights. In the quotations above, student-participants demonstrate an understanding that knowledge is not neutral, that it shapes and informs, that it comes from somewhere, and that our knowledge allows us to notice some things and look past others. Most importantly, these student-participants have learned to recognize information they did not notice before. Because the model explicitly analyzes the way we use words and the work they do, language use is another piece of information students begin to reconsider.

Recognizing Racially-Coded Language

As their perspective expands in shift one, some student-participants begin to recognize how words create and reinforce the stereotypes of *identity prejudice* that come to us through the *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007). For example, Rebecca, who identifies as a white woman, becomes aware of racial coding, often her own. She writes:

> It was not until this semester in [the course], that I realized all of the racist remarks I make and how it affects the people around me. The amount of times I have said to someone, 'Trust me, I'm not racist, I have a black best friend.' I look at myself now and think…SO????? Why was that even necessary to be said? Now when I hear people make remarks like that, I cringe. My grandparents, my parents, my friends, and even past teachers and professors make such remarks. I learned that these remarks are not a way to explain racial fairness; they are actually highly racist and hurtful. (Rebecca, final paper)

Here Rebecca recognizes the racial coding found in everyday words and conversations and from a variety of people around her, including parents and educators who speak from positions of authority. Like Madison's comments about her roommate, Rebecca has come to see how racialized language informs her perceptions, which in turn influences how she interacts with others.

Brianna, who identifies as a white woman, is also becoming aware of the coded racism in her parents' language choices. She writes:

> My mom does work for the jails, so I was aware that a lot of African American men are in these jails. I would also see this on the news. Once in a while a white person would commit the crime, but most of the time it was black men. When a

crime was committed by a white person, sometimes my parents would be

shocked, so I learned that mostly black people commit crimes, and it wasn't as

common in white people. (Brianna, final paper)

Brianna recognizes how her parents have shaped her racialized view of others, in

particular in how they confirm a common conflation in the *social imagination* (Fricker,

2007) of Black men and criminality. Later in the paper she writes about her father's

lessons on "people who cheat the system." She continues, "For example, an African

American man on food stamps with a wallet full of money and a Cadillac Escalade is

something my dad would bring to our attention." Crucially, she is beginning to grasp how

his bringing this to her attention influences what she expects to see and, thus, what she

notices.

Summary of Shift One

In shift one, twenty-one of the twenty-four student-participants move into a

critically reflective learning mode (Fricker, 2007), as they look closely at how "the

images [and language] in their heads" (Anzaldúa, 2013/1992, p. 261) derive from their

social locations and inform their knowledge about themselves, others, and the social

world. Student-participants expand their view to take in new information made visible

through the counterstories presented through course materials, and this information

complicates their pre-course knowledge and challenges their assumptions. The quotations

above also provide strong evidence for the importance of teaching students to analyze

language (Ahmed, 2004a & 2007; Greene, 2009; Postman, 1996) to develop their

awareness of how words do *work* and carry affect (Ahmed, 2004a) and the complex ways

language choices can reinforce stereotypes. The focus in shift one is largely at the

individual level, where students interrogate their knowledge mainly about who they are and how they have been shaped by what they have been taught to notice and value. However, a few students are flexing a critical consciousness that prepares them for the shifts to come.

Steps Forward, Steps Back: The Work Between Shifts One and Two

I pause between my discussion of shift one and shift two to examine the interstices, for there is a great deal occurring between the shifts, as students move forward and backward, challenged by and wrestling with new knowledge. Since learning is messy, the borders between shifts are blurry and unstable. Students lurch forward with significant insight, and then step back from it in the next sentence or the following paragraph. This should be expected for several reasons. For one, the pull of the neoliberal is strong. Neoliberal language is ubiquitous in our *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) and, thus, has deeply informed students' worldview. As Adrienne Rich (1979) says, it can be difficult to see outside this language—and the images it creates in our heads (Anzaldúa, 2013/1992)—because it is how we have learned to think and interpret the world. Therefore, some students continue to ventriloquate neoliberal discourses even as their camera lens expands.

For example, Taylor, who identifies as a white woman, but who also grew up with limited socioeconomic resources, offers a useful example of this push-pull between new learning and the familiar explanations of neoliberal language. In her final paper, Taylor writes that she has been taught to be colorblind. She writes:

I was raise[d] by a family and a school saying that race is personal bigotry not a system imbalance. I went to a school that was mostly white and we only had a

135

small amount of black students. So, our school never truly dealt with any huge

race issues. I think all the kids in my school grew up in a bubble, thinking there is

no racism. Martin Luther King's time is over, and we have moved past all the

meanness… (Taylor, final paper)

Learning about colorblindness through the course helped Taylor reconsider the idea that

we live in a post-racial world. And her mention of a "system imbalance" reaches toward

shift two. She continues:

After watching the angry eye video in class I finely [sic] got [it]. I know it is ok to

recognize someone's color and that is not being racist. I now see how I wasn't

helping the situation of racism being so color blinded. (Taylor, final paper)

This is a significant insight, but Taylor then moves back into neoliberal language,

expressing pity for children who live in a nearby city. She writes, "I feel for those

children in [nearby urban area], without having a good direction you can find yourself

barely making it through high school, and then probably dropping out or not even going

to college." Here Taylor is connecting to her own experience. She grew up in a white

working-class family in a blue-collar section of the urban area she references. At age

thirty-seven, she is completing her bachelor's degree. She has escaped due to the

economic success of her husband, as she describes earlier in her paper but does not

connect here. She continues to ventriloquate neoliberalism saying, "I understand when

you do not have a strong home life you feel misguided and lost. I know from my own

experience with school one could feel hopeless with no direction…" She talks about the

recent "riots" in Baltimore City [following the murder of Freddie Gray], that "the

children that were breaking into stores and being violent feel hopeless. The same feelings

the children in the Baltimore article said they had," referencing our reading about a study on the effect of poverty for children living in Baltimore City (Mmari, Blum & Marshall, 2015). She continues, "Most of the children go to school but they still are feeling like they won't have anything different in their lives then [sic] where they live now." But she places the responsibility for overcoming these obstacles on individual teachers, school counselors, parents, and children. Her discussion does not consider structures such as racial and economic segregation that contribute to the conditions she references.

For other student-participants, interrogating knowledge is challenging, especially when, as demonstrated in the section above, students begin to ask questions about their socialization and racialized language used by their family members, friends, and teachers. These are uncomfortable truths, and students sometimes seek to abate the discomfort they create. The epistemic project of the Feminist-Humanities model is designed to continually shift students' attention, thus keeping them ever on the edge of discomfort. Therefore, it is understandable that students sometimes seek rest by justifying their pre-course knowledge.

For example, Sophia, who identifies as a white woman, describes her affluent, almost exclusively white community, excellent schools and teachers, and supportive parents. She recognizes that her social identities allow her to move easily through the world with access to opportunities, even if she does experience some disadvantage because of her gender. But, like her explorations of race and class, her view is individual. Sophia identifies two of our readings as important to her learning about social class, although race is also an important component of each. She talks about the same article Taylor references (Mmari, Blum & Marshall, 2015), through which she learned that

"Teenagers in Baltimore live in consistent danger and violence every day because the environment they live in is not good." She continues, "If I were in these teenagers [sic] position, I would most likely act the same. Before going through this class I took for granted what I had." Through this reading she has gained a greater appreciation of her privilege.

Sophia also discusses another class reading about the conditions of low-wage workers saying, "I work very hard but I could not imagine what Maria Fernandes had to go through to barely make a living," (Swarns, 2014). She views the Baltimore teens and Maria Fernandes with pity and feels grateful for her advantages. However, without a structural lens, she is unable to recognize the conditions that create their struggles. Watching the documentary *Inequality for All*, she learned that "Rich people do not work as hard as working class people do yet they get more pay and benefits." She mentions that this is "not fair." She more easily recognizes the unfairness in this example because her middle class identity places her at an economic disadvantage to the ultra-wealthy she learns about through the documentary. However, she does not go further to consider what more she could learn about the lives of the Baltimore teens and Maria Fernandes. She is developing more complex knowledge of the ways individuals navigate oppressive social structures but without recognizing how these systems operate and how they are maintained. While Sophia does not retreat from her insights, she does illustrate the limits of an individual focus.

Reaching Toward Shifts Two and Three

While neoliberalism exerts a strong pull on the students quoted above, there are several student-participants—all women, and mostly women of color—who indicate even

within the first shift that they are already *reaching toward* (Gordon, 1997) the shifts to come. Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, writes that although her first paper listed her privileges, and was thus a "good start," she did not then:

> …understand the ways that my privileges actually affect my view on social justice issues. Those rose colored glasses have not only allowed me the freedom to deny my ignorance of these issues, and to not learn about others who do not share my privileges, but have also instilled in me some very biased views that were challenged this semester, some of which have quite honestly scared me.
>
> (Elisabeth, final paper)

Mentioning her fear demonstrates that Elisabeth is recognizing her emotions within the learning process, something she will articulate more clearly later in her final paper. Here, she acknowledges her ignorance, and she uses a near direct quote from Jane Elliott in *The Angry Eye* to describe this shift. She is troubling her assumptions and wrestling at a deep level with a new consciousness and what it means for who she is and who she wishes to become.

Similarly, Molly, who identifies as a Korean American woman, writes in her final paper about the lessons she has learned from her family saying, "I am grateful for them, but their messages about who I am/who I should be do not always coincide with who I want to be." Like Elisabeth, Molly's expanding lens, achieved by challenging her assumptions, has moved her to consider what she could do differently. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it is important to note that student-participants' final papers are learning documents. They often begin tentatively, then build in confidence as the paper progresses. Often their strongest insights can be found at the end, as their learning

coalesces through the reflexive writing process. At the beginning of her final paper, Molly is already reaching forward. In her opening paragraph, she writes:

> Before this class, I had seen the world through a very narrow lens. I saw mostly what I wanted to see and I ignored the rest. My views and beliefs were very much about the individual and about my own personal self. I had never personally been exposed to opinions that opposed my own. However, after readings such as *Animal Farm* and *Naughty by Nature* [Ferguson, 2000] and documentaries such as *Angry Eye* and *Role Reversal*, I have begun to see the world differently. I have been able to hear, first hand, the experiences of my peers and how their lives have been shaped by race, class, and gender. I came into this experience thinking that I knew everything I needed to know and that I truly understood how society has shaped my life. However, through this, I have learned more than I ever could have expected about race, class, and gender and my own role in this society to be the change. (Molly, final paper)

This is a dramatic about-face from Molly's first paper, in which she pushed against the idea that identities have meaning and focused on "others as unique individuals, not defined by society, standards, or specific groups." Even though in her first paper she describes the continual barrage of racist comments she has received throughout her life, she writes that as she has "matured" she has concluded that people are less racist than "curious" about what they do not understand. By contrast, in her final paper she is calling out her own focus on self and how much she has missed by seeing the world through a narrow lens. She was raised in a highly religious family, and the amount of time she has spent attending church and socializing with other church members has limited her

interactions with those who think differently. Therefore, challenging her assumptions is new to her, but she embraces it fully within her final paper. In its opening paragraph quoted above, she is already reaching toward a structural understanding and a more nuanced worldview.

Aisha, who identifies as an Asian woman, is even bolder in the opening of her final paper, and, it appears, like Molly, her experience as a woman of color—specifically bicultural—may inform a greater *density* (Gordon, 1997) within this shift, and prepare her for the shifts to come. Aisha writes:

> Sometimes, the way you identify a person says a lot more about you than it does about the person you are observing. It helps to demonstrate how different environments and norms help shape what we know about ourselves, others and the world through gender, race, and social class. Throughout the course of this semester, I have gone through a lot of emotions and perplexed feelings toward how I see myself as a person in this society. A lot of factors contribute to the way my thinking has evolved from the first day of class up until now. Based on how I identified myself, in regards to these social categories, I said [in her first paper] I was an Asian female and I classified myself in the middle social class. That was more than enough for me at that point, but after reading, discussing and understanding the barriers between who I thought I was and who I actually am, I realize that my identity goes further beyond the simple words I use to describe myself. (Aisha, final paper)

This is an astute observation and demonstrates a developing knowledge of structural difference. Additionally, Aisha is using the emotions she has experienced during her

141

learning process to develop further insights. Her first sentence moves firmly into reflective mode to consider how much our perceptions say about who we are. She continues:

> We discussed in class at one point, a term called intersectionality, which means that my experience is not the same as other people, because my race, gender, age etc. are different from them. So, trying to look at the world through their eyes is hard, but creating my own lens in which I incorporate their understanding of my world and my identification is more convenient and understandable. (Aisha, final paper)

Here Aisha is trying out the analytic language of the Feminist-Humanities model to better understand her experience as well as the experiences of those positioned differently, and how the two come together for a more complex, more accurate social view. The last sentence in this quotation is an excellent demonstration of the *multilogue* (Gorelick, 1996/1991) in action, where a greater understanding of differing perspectives allows her to correct her assumptions as well as learn more about her own identities and their impact. While not a precise understanding of intersectionality, this marks a significant shift in her thinking and demonstrates the building of an acute analytic capacity.

Mona, who identifies as a mixed race woman, closes her final paper using the language of analysis provided through the Feminist-Humanities model to describe how she views her course learning. She writes:

> We have to stand up for our beliefs. But in order to do this we need to know what our beliefs and values are. This is why it is important to know who you are because we cannot speak for other [sic] if you are still trying to find your voice.

Be sure of yourself. Be confident in your ethics and morals. Before disagreeing

with another standpoint, learn about that standpoint first. Know why you do not

like it so you can provide examples on why it is 'wrong.' 'Ask the questions that

are not being asked.'[80] This is why I believe this is a great class and support it for

non-education majors [she is not an education major]. Well at least the way you

teach it because as [I] mention[ed] before, this is my second time taking the class.

My first time taking it was much different. It was more of a lecture based class

rather than discussion and the students did not really speak on how they felt. You

gave us information, stimulating articles, and great documentaries to watch. Each

of which, no matter who you are, provoked students to say something whether in

the classroom or outside the classroom. This class made people more aware of

what is going on in our world and how people unknowing[sic] say things are that

[sic] prompted by judgments, stereotypes, and accusations. I can recall how one

person in the class noticed her father adding unnecessary information into his

sentences [I believe this was Brianna.] She said she would have never paid

attention to it until she took this class. I bet there will be students in this class who

will carry these lessons with them forever. (Mona, final paper)

Mona offers specifics about how the epistemic project has allowed her to interrogate her

beliefs. She references language provided through the Feminist-Humanities model, such

as, "Ask the questions that are not being asked" (from Matsuda, 2010) as a way to make

visible the information we may not have noticed previously as well as the necessity to

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[80] She is referencing my introduction of Matsuda's (2010) concept: *ask the other question*.

attend to the multiplicity of identity to make sense of social phenomena. She describes

how pausing and listening can allow the space to correct for *identity prejudice* (Fricker,

2007). And she offers an example of a learning outcome she witnessed in class, as

Brianna told us how she now recognizes her father's use of racially coded language. And,

importantly for this study, Mona is the only student with direct experience of how this

course is taught differently by other instructors at the university. She specifically points

to the opportunity for students to speak and interact in class and how this deepened her

insights about course materials. Around the midpoint of the semester, Mona stayed after

class and talked with me about this in depth. She told me that, as a person of mixed race,

taking this course has helped her better understand feelings she had not before had

language to describe. This surprised me. It was illuminating to find through my analysis

that other women of color make similar statements in their final papers and during the

focus group conversations. I provide greater evidence of this in shift two in the next

section and shift three described in chapter five. It is important to note that, other than

Elisabeth, the other women in this section are all women of color. Even within their

tentative steps, each of the women I quote in this section is already reaching toward the

shifts to come and demonstrating their growing analytic capacity.

2. **Shift Two:** *The-Things-Behind-the-Things***: Structure and Relations of Power**

Shift two illuminates our social structures—the gears that organize and sort our

social lives—and their inherent relations of power to provide a more nuanced

understanding of the systems individuals must navigate. It is within shift two that

students begin to connect the individual and the social to illuminate their interactions and

collisions. To examine these structures, we first have to destabilize the surface of our

144

previous knowledge; this is the work of shift one and necessary before *the things-behind-the-things* (Gordon, 1997) can be revealed. It is important to note that, as Fisher (2001) describes, shifts in attention can be abrupt or gradual, as I demonstrate through the student-participant evidence in this section.[81] The two main course materials I used to introduce the skills of structural and power analysis are *Animal Farm* and *StarPower*, and I did so early in the semester in back-to-back class sessions (sessions three and four). Providing the language to analyze power and structure early on allows students to apply these analyses throughout the course. While seventeen of the twenty-four student-participants demonstrate some understanding of social structures, the number who articulate a power analysis is far fewer (10 students out of 24). And other than Mark, it is the women student-participants who provide evidence of power analysis. Significantly, once again, other than Elisabeth, the women who do so are women of color. This is telling. In a course that interrogates social identities, it makes sense that the social identities of student-participants would inform their learning. However, as I described in chapter three, it took time for me to recognize this. Additionally, what was wholly unexpected was the ways the Feminist-Humanities model impacted the women of color as a group. As I describe below, the language of analysis of the Feminist-Humanities model appears to have offered explanatory power to illuminate the *ghosts* (Gordon, 1997) on the periphery, making visible what these students had long sensed was there but could not quite bring into focus. Near the end of this chapter, I discuss in detail what I learned from the women of color, and their contributions also feature in my discussion of shift three in chapter five.

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[81] See chapter two for a discussion of the characteristics of *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001).

In her final paper, Elisabeth reflects on what she wrote in her first paper in a comment that exemplifies shift two: "I was only aware of privilege and injustice at the lowest, most personal level." As she says, what she has learned through the course is about the "sources of these phenomena: the oppressive hierarchical structures deeply rooted in American society that systematically produce social injustice." But she goes further to write:

> Moreover, my limited knowledge of these structures led me to believe that social inequality was an inevitable truth that I could not do anything about. The oppressive system in America had confined me to such a limited point of view that I could not even recognize them, much less see beyond them and imagine a society without them. (Elisabeth, final paper)

This is a sophisticated description of the privileged social view and how neoliberal conditioning tells us inequity is inevitable, thus, there is nothing we can do to change it. As described in my introduction in chapter one, the perception of inevitability is precisely the belief the Feminist-Humanities model aims to disrupt. In this quotation, Elisabeth embraces this disruption and shifts from an individual view to one that takes account of the larger social landscape and how it influences individual lives and, without our intervention, maintains inequities. Examining social structures has revealed for Elisabeth who is controlling the gears, and who is not. She now recognizes that her ignorance of structures and their power differentials allows inequity to flourish, keeping her from envisioning alternatives. Her language not only breaks from neoliberal discourse, but it also has a forward thrust that indicates a growing understanding of herself as an agent of change.

From the third class session forward, the Feminist-Humanities model focuses on structure and power, launched through a discussion of *Animal Farm*. Here is the entry from my teacher/researcher journal from our discussion of the book:

> I began the discussion by asking for a show of hands of how many felt the ending was tragic/hopeful. As I typically see in this class, nearly all the students were adamant that the ending was tragic: at the end of the book, the animals are in a worse situation than they were at the beginning. Thus, the revolution could be termed a failure. I let them talk for a while about the tragedy of the animals' predicament as they look through the farmhouse window, looking from pig to man and man to pig, unable to see the difference. After some astute students, like Catherine, Elisabeth, and Emma had explained their perspective, I asked the group: What do the animals have at the end of the book that they don't have at the beginning? Elisabeth, who is always right there with me during class discussions, paying close attention, quickly responded: knowledge. Yes! I said: Now they better understand how the power system works. They now know what they did wrong following the revolution. (Instructor, teacher/researcher, February 11, 2015)

I include this passage to demonstrate how I framed the reading of *Animal Farm* and to link back to the research problem described in chapter one. The overarching aim of the Feminist-Humanities model is to create a *shift in attention* (Fisher, 2001) that could allow students to reconsider Orwell's ending and to use it as a launching point to identify the necessary components of a social revolution that could create and sustain a pluralistic and well-functioning democracy. The animals must recognize the ways they are implicated in

the pigs' rise to power as well as their agency for creating justice-oriented change. These

twin revelations can offer a way to move beyond the despair of this final scene toward

wonder (Ahmed, 2004b), to ask what would be necessary to build a more successful

rebellion. By encouraging students to recognize the knowledge contained in this moment,

I hope to engender a sense of wonder about their own potential for creating change.

StarPower

Reading *Animal Farm* was an important curricular anchor. However, although it

was referenced regularly during class discussions throughout the rest of the semester and

in informal writing assignments not included as data sources, only a few students mention

it in their final papers. This may be because the book lays important groundwork that was

more fully realized in the next class session when students played *StarPower*. This is

mentioned in Focus Group Two, where three of the group members agree that they

enjoyed reading *Animal Farm,* but its lessons became much clearer when they played

StarPower. About the game, Speaker 10, who from context clues likely identifies as a

white woman, says:

> Because we were all talking about power. I remember the class before, and how
>
> it's so wrong that one person [Napoleon, the leader of the pigs in *Animal Farm*]
>
> can dictate everyone's life. But when we were playing that game [*StarPower*], we
>
> wanted that power so bad. I think it's crazy how that experiment, and just the
>
> experiences in general, worked out. That was pretty cool. But that was a good
>
> way to introduce the whole *Animal Farm* topic. (Speaker 10, focus group)

This sequencing was intentional. Student-participants built an awareness of the

operations of power by reading *Animal Farm*, and then experienced it through

148

StarPower. And insights gained from the game appear in the final papers of most students, and again in the focus group. Understandably, a simulation where students experience the allure of power as well as the disillusionment of its absence more concretely manifests the ideas laid out in *Animal Farm*. This also speaks to the potency of experiential learning, especially when it builds on the cognitive framework of previous reading. This pairing is also essential for catalyzing shift three, as I discuss in chapter five.

Catherine, who identifies as a mixed race woman, credits *StarPower* with helping her better recognize power's intoxication. In her final paper, she writes, "…when we played Starpower, I was hungry for power, and I did not want to give it up." She follows this saying, "I have learned that life is not as easy as I thought it was. My social standing has turned me into a very greedy person…" Here Catherine recognizes that her social location has given her power, even when she does not realize she has it, and this power influences her thoughts and interactions. For example, she writes that she now recognizes her socialization has taught her she is "better than the poor." She follows this statement with a couple of powerful insights. First she writes, "My social class has allowed me to hide the reality of some people's lives, and it has shaped how I think about certain people." She continues writing she was unaware of the struggles of the poor and the ways she has blamed them for their poverty. She uses the camera lens metaphor as she writes about "broadening my lens to be more informed about what the world is like for others without privilege." Catherine is complicating her knowledge and learning to recognize the complex ways an individual's choices are informed and organized by their social

locations, and that blaming others for their struggles maintains hegemonic systems of power.

Brianna, who identifies as a white woman, also recognizes the allure of power. In her final paper she writes, "The Star Power game really helped me see the difference in classes, as I was a square [the group with the greatest power, who were given control of the game after the second round] and felt very powerful and important." She likens this to the advantages she enjoys as a member of the upper middle class as well as the burdens of the middle class she learned about through watching *Inequality For All* (although she does not mention the documentary by name). It is worth noting that she has changed her position from her first paper, where she stated emphatically that she is a member of the upper class. Course materials helped her more accurately identify her family's economic position.

Like Catherine and Brianna, Erin, who identifies as a white woman, also learned about power hierarchies through playing *StarPower*. In her final paper she writes:

> This idea of hierarchy goes back to the game star power we played in class. The
> middle class was content but pushing to make it to the top, the upper classes were
> selfish and didn't want anyone else in their group, while the lower class was ready
> to quit. They had little to nothing and soon learned that no one was going to listen
> to them no matter what they did...why keep trying when the chances of moving up
> the economic ladder are slim to none? (Erin, final paper)

Erin's is an adept description of how the game played out, as well as some of her classmates more significant learning through the game. Those in the Circle group, the group with the least power, lost interest in "playing the game" early on and simply sat

quietly, dejected as they waited for the game to end. *StarPower* is an effective demonstration of the frustration, and sometimes the despondence, that comes from knowing you cannot win, despite your efforts, because the game is rigged. It is also an effective way for the lucky few who find themselves in the Squares to feel the intoxication of power.

In my teacher/researcher journal, I captured details about a discussion I had with Mona, who identifies as a mixed race woman, who was a Circle (the group at the bottom of the hierarchy), while the Squares were outside developing their new rules after taking charge of the game. They were outside a long time, and Mona was visibly annoyed as she waited. When I asked her how she was feeling, she talked about the Squares "wasting her time" and all the things she could be doing if she were not waiting on them, including writing a paper for another class or working to make money. Although she was outspoken about her feelings while waiting for the Squares, other students were also impatient with the game at this point. Sarah, who identifies as a white woman, was frustrated, but not about the time being wasted. From my teacher/researcher journal:

> Sarah (Circle) made it clear that she wasn't interested in hearing what the Squares had to say. When I questioned her more about this, she said she was sure they wouldn't make rules that would benefit those in the classroom now, particularly not the Circles. Most of the Circle members nodded or laughed when she said this. (Instructor, teacher/researcher journal, February 18, 2015)

Similarly, Allison, who identifies as a white woman, also a Circle, writes in her final paper:

I ended the game being in the lowest possible class, which is different from my

life, where I am part of the middle class. This result made me feel weak and

inferior, and as if I did not matter. (Allison, final paper)

This is an astute observation and edging toward shift three through its recognition of her

emotional reaction to the game. Allison also mentions *Inequality for All*, where she

learned:

The middle class in America are the job creators, but this may turn into a big

problem, as the middle class is shrinking. This information makes me feel scared

because I do not know what the future will hold for our country. (Allison, final

paper)

She has begun to consider what might happen if supports for the middle class further

degrade, and *Inequality for All* makes it clear these supports have eroded over the past

four decades. And, again, describing herself as feeling *scared* paves the way for her to

use those feelings toward a deeper analysis of what is happening. This is what Allison is

reaching toward.

Regarding her learning from both *StarPower* and *Inequality for All*, Elisabeth,

who identifies as a white woman, writes:

Like most middle-class Americans, I was under the idealistic impression that

social mobility was high in America and that people have power over their

economic status by working hard and being careful with their finances. The

documentary Inequality for All made me realize the less comforting reality: the

American economic system is designed to keep the rich in power and leaves the

poor with little or no opportunity for upward mobility. (Elisabeth, final paper)

152

Elisabeth writes further, "Out of the three major identity categories—gender, social class, and race—I sincerely believed that social class was one that people could control." She then writes that *StarPower* is where she "experienced the gross inaccuracy of this assumption." This is another small but significant moment of insight that demonstrates Elisabeth's commitment to paying attention to information she has missed.

Elisabeth makes another related statement about her experience playing *StarPower* that is worth examining in detail. She writes, "I followed the squares' directions as precisely as possible, in hopes of gaining their pity..." About this and her desperation to move up, and the rule-breaking she saw exhibited by other desperate players who were losing the game [Mark in particular], she writes:

> When I applied this concept to the poverty-stricken inner cities where violence is prevalent, especially in the recent case of the Baltimore riots, I started to understand that crime is not always a reflection of people's character, or the cause of their economic situation, but rather a reaction to their frustration with the system that oppresses them. (Elisabeth, final paper)

Through this statement, Elisabeth demonstrates a growing understanding of how structures influence and limit individual choice, and the feeling of powerlessness that derives from those limits. As I documented in my teacher/researcher journal, when we began to play the second round of *StarPower*, after the Squares announced their new rules, Elisabeth was the only student who went to the board to adjust her score at the end of the round, as instructed by the Squares. In fact, she is the only student who followed any of the Squares' new rules. In the class discussion after the game, she described her reasons for this saying, "I'm a rule-follower." When the rules change, she does what is

expected of her: she learns the new set of rules and adjusts accordingly, a model student and model citizen. It is important to note that her understanding of what is expected of her is also gendered. She is also beginning to recognize that her model behavior can support and maintain inequity. This may be her most valuable lesson from the game.

The Feminist-Humanities model introduces power early in the curriculum to shift students' attention and allow for a more nuanced interrogation of differential impacts, opportunities, and access to the resources of success. However, even though it was a regular point of discussion throughout the remaining semester, few students grappled with a recognition of power relations within their final papers. It is difficult for students to take up a power analysis when they have been conditioned to respect and admire the powerful and when power is rendered invisible through neoliberal discourse. Taking up a structural analysis does not guarantee that a student will also wrestle with the power hierarchies that support the structures. Recognizing structure plus power changes the conversation in dramatic ways. However, fewer students make this connection. But when they do, as with this example from Elisabeth, their learning takes on greater depth and purpose.

Analyzing Systems of Oppression

After introducing its tools of analysis—knowledge, identity, intersectionality, structure, power, language, and affect—, the Feminist-Humanities model moves into separate explorations first of gender, then socioeconomic status, and then race. This sequencing is intentional. In the past, I had introduced race first, but with a predominately white student population in my classes, this sequence did not work as well, as the white students were not yet fully prepared for in-depth discussions of race. I then moved the

examination of socioeconomic status first, and this allowed students to build analytic language before we examined race. Then, about the time I was working on the proposal for this dissertation, I mentioned to my dissertation advisor that the white women in my classes were able to use insights they gained from discussions of gender to develop greater retrospective understanding about the structural oppression of race.[82] She recommended that I introduce gender ahead of race. From my observation, this has had a positive impact on student learning, again in particular for the white women, around the social construction of race, its power hierarchies, and their impacts. When I collected data for this study, the sequence I used was gender, socioeconomic status, and race. For this reason, I present below the student evidence of structural analysis using roughly this sequence. However, because the quotations come from students' final papers, they may be referencing more than one structure in a given quotation.

A power analysis was most notably taken up by a handful of the women based on insights gained from reading Judith Lorber (1994). It was predominantly the women for whom the interrogation of gender made possible a growing understanding of social structures, providing further evidence of the complex ways social identities inform the learning process in a social justice course. However, Mark also demonstrates significant insights, as I also describe in this section. Additionally, in the semester under investigation, for the first time in my many years of teaching this course, I had a critical mass of women of color in the class. In fact, it was the first time I had more than one student of color in the same course section, and the first time I had any men of color in one of my classes. As I discuss later in this chapter and in chapter five, the analyses of

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[82] At the time, my sequence was socioeconomic status, race, and gender.

power and affect resonated with the women of color in significant ways. And their discussions of the structure of gender give access to the outlines of this analytic capacity as it germinates.

Michelle, who identifies as a Black woman, brings together gender, race, and class in a deft structural analysis through her discussion of Lorber (1994). She reaches toward a power analysis when she writes, "Women have a long history of oppression and subjugation, particularly in comparison to men." She writes that Lorber has helped her recognize this, as this work challenges not only gender stereotypes but also asks how and why they came to be; here Michelle takes up the heart of Lorber's argument, which concludes that the sole purpose of a gendered division of labor is the subjugation of women. Michelle closes this section of her final paper writing, "Gender, along with race and class are barriers to achieving social justice in the world." She continues, "…gender is learned through self-surveillance and is limiting in that it demands certain norms and expectations by society." She then writes:

> And then there's this misogynous belief that men are greater than women, which impacts every woman on a daily basis…The double standards and lack of gender equality is, like race, a result of the American gendered system. (Michelle, final paper)

Through these quotations, Michelle exhibits a clear recognition of systemic gender inequity and how power is distributed through it, and connects it to our racialized system, as well.

Sophia, who identifies as a white woman, referencing a course reading about the way parenthood differentially impacts the careers of women and men (Miller, 2014), writes:

> This makes me feel mad because women are not being treated the same as men. Everyone thinks that by being a female it is a disadvantage, however I do not think so. Women are strong willed human beings that will fight for what we want. It may not seem like women have power in our society, yet we have been a great contribution to what our society has become. Nevertheless, men always end up with having the power. (Sophia, final paper)

Here Sophia recognizes that power is at play in these dynamics, acknowledging that women must fight for what they deserve because our gendered system awards unearned power to men.

Aisha, who identifies as an Asian woman, also uses Lorber to articulate her growing recognition of gender's impact. She writes:

> I did not think of gender roles in the society any differently until after we read and discussed Judith Lorber's article, "The Social Construction of Gender," in which she said that the main reason why gender emerges is not because it was instilled in us to act like "males" or "females" but because the society wants us to have those assigned roles. (Aisha, final paper)

Aisha does not continue to Lorber's conclusion that these assigned roles exist to subjugate women, but she picks up on this later. She writes, when reading Linda Holmes (2014), she realized that "anatomy does not account for much…" She continues:

If you are male, but you act like a girl, dress like a girl and talk like a girl, you will be considered 'female.' It sounds derogatory when I put it that way, but that is how I felt when we were discussing this article. It made me feel like the word 'female' was a synonym of the word, 'weak.' To think that when I am older and even now, I have less privilege when it comes to getting a job, buying a house and making money because of my gender makes me really question the way our society is set up. I felt mistreated after reading this article. The rollercoaster of emotions inside me ranged from anger to disturbed to weak. It made me feel like my anatomy, the role as a 'female' assigned to me and my identification as a woman made me less of a person than someone of the opposite sex. I realize something now that I did not the first day of this class, which is being classified as a female has a lot more to do with [than] just colors [a reference to the gendered view of wearing pink and blue discussed in Lorber, 1994]. It has to do with how the society looks at me as well as how I want to be looked at by the society.

(Aisha, final paper)

It is interesting that she makes her comparison between a *male* and a *girl*, rather than a *man* and a *woman*, or a *boy* and a *girl*. However, Aisha demonstrates a true structural and power analysis. Significantly, like Michelle, her anger and frustration build as she writes her final paper. And she uses affective language to describe her insight about gendered structural inequity. Her "imagination is reaching toward" (Gordon, 1997, p. 4) an affective analysis, one she will articulate clearly by the end of her final paper. Because of the blending and blurring of lines between the shifts, this section is an imperfect place for these quotations from Aisha. I could have moved them to the next chapter and my

158

discussion of affective analysis. However, I placed them here because they demonstrate clear evidence of her growing recognition of the gendered system and its operations of power.

Mark, who identifies as a white man, also demonstrates an awareness of the gendered system saying, "These stereotyping gender roles our society has only hurt because everyone wants general equality for all, but we can't achieve it because we just make assumptions about everything." Importantly, his point about assumptions reaches toward Fricker's (2007) point that reserving judgment allows the space necessary to correct for *credibility deficits*, while it also teeters on the edge of a neoliberal gender-blind perspective. In this quotation, his thinking falls between these two perspectives, again illustrating the work that occurs in the interstices. Mark follows this statement with a discussion of his participation in a high school STEM program where half the participants were "girls" and "the top few students in my class were female." He references our reading (Vedantam, 2013) about the paucity of women in the STEM fields and how this works to further deter young women from considering these fields as viable career options. He then references the same reading Sophia mentioned (Miller, 2014) about parenthood and its differential impact on women's and men's careers, which he refers to as "unfair." He goes further to write:

> Also the notion that a man will be less concerned about his kids and not let it get in the way of his job is complete nonsense because I know for myself, when I get to have children, I'm going to care about them even if it may hurt my career. (Mark, final paper)

In this statement, Mark recognizes the arbitrary distinctions we use to separate men and women and how they draw boundaries around acceptable gender expression.

Student-participants often use their schooling as a frame of reference to examine the meaning and impact of social structures and their differential impacts. This is true as they interrogate socioeconomic status. Elaine, who identifies as a white woman, develops significant insight about institutional structures and how they impact lives by reflecting on her experiences in the public school system as a person with dyslexia and dysgraphia. She writes:

> Like so many children with learning disabilities, I was lost in the classroom. The teachers and the administration are so desperate to improve overall standardized test grades, individual students are often overlooked. Having a student that does not have a visible disability, not causing any problems, and just sitting looking at the assignments they cannot read, doesn't really get any attention. Even the very person that is hired to test for disabilities in the school system, failed to offer any help. Help costs money, and money is needed in other areas, not to help a few 'slower kids.' I never realized it before this class, but this is a form of institutional discrimination. The brighter children get the state of the art curriculum which in turn helps bring up standardize [sic] test scores and that results in more funding for the school districts. Imagine, if I was a minority living in an economically depressed area and had a learning disability. The chances I would have gotten out of school are very slim. My life would have been completely different then [sic] it is today. My desire to be a productive member of society challenged…If education is power, then my parents have given me a superpower…I am lucky

because I may have been one of the children that the public educational system would have failed. (Elaine, final paper)

Through this passage, Elaine demonstrates a nuanced structural analysis and reaches toward a power analysis as she considers how her experiences might have been different if her social identities were different. She connects the individual and the social for a deeper understanding of the influence of social identities on the academic resources that lead to success, and she does so through an example of institutional discrimination in her own life and how her family's resources allowed her to overcome it. This is a powerful passage and a significant insight from Elaine.

It is clear in Hallie's discussion of social class that she is also developing a structural analysis. Hallie, who identifies as a white woman, writes:

Since my father grew up in poverty and overcame it, he has no patience with handouts. Because of my father, I used to also believe that welfare programs encouraged laziness. If my dad can live in a trailer and end up owning his own company, why can't everyone work as hard as him and succeed? The answer to that is race and gender. Since my father is a Caucasian male, people were more likely to take a chance on him and encourage him to go back to college for his business degree. If my father were an African American woman, he wouldn't be in the same position he is today. (Hallie, final paper)

This is especially meaningful because of where Hallie began the semester, as demonstrated in her first paper, in which she was defensive about both race and social class. And in this quotation, she also mentions the significance of her father's gender in his life outcomes. Importantly, she follows her sentence above with another passage that

demonstrates a break from neoliberalism and a greater understanding of how structures

organize lives. She writes:

> Race is a very touchy subject at times. Some of the articles in class really helped
> me understand things that previously angered me. The article, 'What My Bike
> Has Taught Me About White Privilege' [Dowsett, 2014] put everything into
> perspective for me. I used to think that white privilege meant that I didn't work
> hard for what I had. I assumed it was an attack on me for simply being white, but
> that isn't the case at all. As the article explains, the world was simply designed for
> white people, and black people have to try to make their way through it. It isn't
> anyone's fault, it simply is the way the world is set up. (Hallie, final paper)

Early in the semester during a class discussion, Hallie bristled at the term privilege, so

this is remarkable. She is beginning to recognize the complex ways social identities

influence individual experience, and how systems create and maintain inequity. Saying

"It isn't anyone's fault" does not fully reckon power and the intent behind "the way the

world is set up" or the necessity for change. However, through this quotation, Hallie

demonstrates a solid structural analysis.

> Regarding socioeconomic status, Junke, who identifies as a Chinese man, writes:
> …before I came to America, my view of socioeconomic status from school are
> more focus on students, because I have poor classmates, normal classmates, and
> rich classmates study together…In America, I feel it is more focus on which
> school [you] are in, it makes you different. (Junke, final paper)

Junke, born and raised in China but now in the U.S. to attend the university, is

recognizing something important about American social systems and how they differ

162

from those in his home country. In America, because of our specific racialized history and residential segregation, where we attend school has a seismic impact on our access to the educational resources that lead to economic success. It is important to note that Junke must make this translation before he can more fully grasp our discussions about socioeconomic status in American. Therefore, this revelation is important to his learning in a course focused on social justice in an American context.

In the section on race in her final paper, Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, again references her previous "lowest level" or individual level understanding. She writes, "I thought that racism was a belief people held, which produced discrimination, not the other way around." She credits Blake (2014)[83] with helping her see that most of us only understand racism "as an issue of individual morality. For this reason, we believe that color-blindness and tolerance are synonymous with racial equality." This is a sophisticated observation, and it demonstrates a nuanced recognition of how race operates as a system, and how colorblindness subverts reality and keeps individuals from understanding how the system works. She follows this by writing about how illuminating it was for her when the class discussed Affirmative Action (Leung, 2009), which helped her recognize how strategies that seek to even the playing field "leave the privileged people with the same opportunity to succeed, and while increasing the opportunity for those not in power to succeed by raising their expectations, goals and motivation." Her deepening understanding of power relations helps her see why those in power might not support these interventions.

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[83] This article is about the work of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2017/2003) and his writing on colorblindness.

Catherine, who identifies as a mixed race woman, like Elaine, develops a structural analysis by reflecting on her schooling. She writes:

> I was very naive to the struggles that many people, mainly minorities [which she does not consider herself, regardless of her mixed racial identity], face after high school. My education also highlighted the belief that going to college made you a better and smarter person. To add, being surrounded by white people with privilege and power, it shaped me to believe that whites are more successful, more educated, and more willing to learn. Without seeing minorities in my school, I came to the conclusion that they were unmotivated and not good enough or rich enough to go to a prestigious private school. (Catherine, final paper)

Here Catherine challenges her assumptions head-on; she acknowledges the structure that leads the powerful and privileged to feel superior to "unmotivated" minorities. She writes that she now recognizes this suggests, "If it isn't your problem and the people surrounded by you aren't struggling then it must not exist…" This is a significant revelation for Catherine, and likely a difficult one for her to face. Regarding race and the media, Catherine writes, "Media has challenged what I see as beautiful because of their constant praise of white women and repetitive reprimands of women of color," which she writes, "contradicts what I want to believe." This is an astute analysis that recognizes power relations and how they shape the ways we view ourselves and others. Her "prestigious" schooling where she was surrounded by privileged white people and the messages she has learned from the media about beauty may have contributed to her alignment with whiteness and dissociation from her mixed race identity. These quotations suggest she

has learned to recognize the ways her socialization has informed her thoughts, behaviors, and values.

After stating in his first paper that race relations were improving, in his final paper, Mark, who identifies as a white man, refers to it as a "huge issue." He continues:

This class taught me that racism is still very much alive today, and that it's not just not seeing someone as a different race as an equal but seeing how race affects the opportunity people are given because of their race. (Mark, final paper)

At the end of the semester, Mark recognizes differential opportunity based on race. Later he writes, "The stereotypes that are associated to different races all stem from the opportunity that was provided to the people and the privilege given to them." This is an early step toward a power analysis. He speaks of his own prejudices based on growing up, going to school with, and having friends who are predominantly white. He makes an awkward reference to "how you see more ghetto black people than you do ghetto white people." Although he does end this paragraph with the statement, "That the people I see as ghetto, could have easily been me if I grew up with the circumstances they grew up in." There is an element of recognition about how our environment shapes us, and how race combined with economic position has an impact on our opportunities, even if Mark is not recognizing his own use of racialized language. Mark is building at least a rudimentary understanding of the language of analysis for structure and power, and these quotations again illustrate the work occurring in the interstices of the shifts, when students are trying out but not fully grasping a new analytic tool.

Similarly, Hallie, who identifies as a white woman, begins to recognize how individuals are surveilled differently based on race through an example I offered during a class discussion. She writes:

> An excellent point was brought up in class about how many black people are arrested for drugs. Rachel [instructor] asked us what we thought would happen if a bunch of police officers came to [our university] and started raiding the rooms, and that is a great question. Plenty of white students would be arrested for drugs; the only reason this doesn't happen is because the police are always drawn to the poverty-stricken neighborhoods. (Hallie, final paper)

In this passage, Hallie demonstrates a recognition of how police perceive and interact with people differently based on their racial identities. She retracts part of her statement at the end of the paragraph saying, "Due to the fact that police officers are drawn to poverty-stricken areas, it would only make sense that black people are targeted (even if it's unintentional)." There is a lot going on in this statement, both with her use of the word "unintentional" as well as the conflation of black skin and poverty. Her structural analysis is rudimentary; however, structures are becoming visible to her. Like Mark, she is trying out power as an analytic tool while still holding on to neoliberal language.

Within the quotations above, some steps toward structural analysis are tentative, and others are bolder. However, in each of these quotations, the student-participants are recognizing a larger social system that impacts the daily lives of individuals differently based on their identities and positionality. In these examples, student-participants connect the individual and the social and recognize how they inform each other, and how structures press on individuals and have consequences for their lived experience and life

outcomes. Connecting the individual and the social is an important and pivotal shift in the Feminist-Humanities model because it breaks with neoliberal discourse and underscores the need for equitable change. And a few students—Elisabeth, Mark, Michelle, Sophia, Aisha, Elaine, Catherine, and Hallie—embrace or reach toward a power analysis within their developing structural consciousness.

Steps Forward, Steps Back

As I demonstrated with shift one, students often develop insights about the connection between the individual and the social and then walk them back by reverting to neoliberal language constructs. This is also true with structural analysis. Again, this is to be expected as students wrestle with new knowledge that profoundly contradicts their socialization. For example, Madison, who identifies as a white woman, writes, "It never really crossed my mind that not everyone receives the same type of education, or educational encouragement that I did even within the United States until I got to college." She continues:

> Unfortunately, in American society, money talks and without it very little can be done to change neighborhoods or school systems. This means that because only low income students attend certain school systems there is no one with money (or power) to change that school system for the better. (Madison, final paper)

This suggests a growing understanding of systemic barriers like residential segregation and how they influence economic resources. However, Madison then uses a deficit reading of these systemic barriers. She writes about the poor quality of teachers in these low income schools where they are "paid very little…may not even be certified…had no other job opportunities. Individuals who are teaching because it is their last resort may

167

not be good teachers and they may not try to help students do their best and succeed." She then mentions the problem of having teachers "Without real passion." This is neoliberal ventriloquation, where systemic economic and racial issues are located in the teachers, who are blamed for a failing system. Madison fails to recognize the challenges faced by teachers, families, and students in schools with high concentrations of poverty, along with how neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty are created.

Her statement is made more interesting when compared to her previous paragraph, where Madison relates a story about her fourth grade teacher who, responding to a question Madison asked in class, said, "'That is a stupid question' and continued reading." Madison writes about this, "That one statement changed the rest of my schooling and until college I never asked a question about an assignment." So even in her exceptional schools within her exceptional school system, one of the best in the country by her description, she is also subject to teachers who "may not try to help students do their best and succeed." However, she does not recognize this contradiction. She follows this in her next paragraph with another statement that, "Most of my schooling taught me that I can do anything I set my mind to." Madison is toggling between rudimentary structural analysis and neoliberal ventriloquation in a complicated struggle to come to terms with the implications of power relations. Her lack of reference to course materials within her discussion may also have limited her analysis.

Like Madison, Michelle, who identifies as a Black woman, also falls back into neoliberal conditioning with statements like this one, where she describes her decision to attend an in-state college because it is more affordable for her family. She writes:

> To me, it's like trying on a shoe. You wear what's comfortable. Anything above or below your correct size does not perfectly fit your foot. You live within your means (or shoe size) and make the best out of that situation! This 'living within your means' does not equate to poverty, though. To me, it's making the best choice based on one's individual circumstances. (Michelle, final paper)

In this quotation, Michelle suggests individual behavior should fit rather than challenge the system. Her shoe metaphor places the responsibility on individual choice rather than structural change. She does not go further to consider the fates of those with fewer economic resources than herself to explore how the system provides significant barriers to their opportunities for higher education.

Sophia, who identifies as a white woman, mentions having never considered white privilege before the insights she gained from reading Dowsett (2014). However, she then immediately goes into the language of stereotype when she writes:

> I was most likely given more opportunities and advantages than my non-Caucasian classmates. A lot of my African American and Mexican-American classmates most likely were not being supported at home or wanted to try because they knew they were in these lower classes. However, since I did grow up in a wealthy community, there were African American and Mexican American families that did provide support for their children. (Sophia, final paper)

Sophia takes a small step forward by recognizing differential opportunities but in a way that still blames those who are less successful. She also equates success with whiteness while judging the families of non-white students. She does not go deeper to examine what it means when even in a community she frequently refers to as "wealthy" it is still

169

the black and brown bodies who can be found in the remedial classes. For when she writes "lower classes" here, I believe she is referring to her earlier statement about the segregation in her schools, wherein she:

> …was always in the more advanced/honor classes. Most of the African American and/or Mexican American students were in the lower/standard classes. My school is a very stereotypical school when it comes to race and how the students are separated. In my first *Who Am I Paper*, I said that my race has not had an impact on my education experience but now I think it has. (Sophia, final paper)

She gets there through complicated and racially-coded language. Her recognition that race has impacted her academic opportunities is a modest but still important revelation.

When grading papers at the end of the semester, and for several readings as I began my initial data analysis, these steps back led me to the conclusion that students had learned far less than I had hoped. However, after many further readings, and following my comprehensive data analysis, I now view these steps back as the intense pull of neoliberal discourses, as students wrestle with challenges to their worldview in the face of the messages that surround them from the media, school, family, and friends. This is understandable. The epistemic project of the Feminist-Humanities model disrupts what students think they know, and this creates a cognitive dissonance that students may seek to reduce as they write their final exam. It is useful to revert to neoliberalism to wrap up the course project in a satisfying way. However, the small cracks in their worldview may continue to reverberate. Without following up with students after the course has ended, it is impossible to fully comprehend the stickiness (Ahmed, 2004a) of the Feminist-Humanities model. However, there are indications that the tools of analysis have

connected the individual and the social for the majority of student-participants (17 out of 24) in ways that may have staying power.

In the rest of this chapter and in chapter five, I more fully reckon with the influence of social identities on the patterns and varieties of students' learning performances. How much students can be moved by the pedagogical interventions of the Feminist-Humanities model, at least in ways that can be positively confirmed through student writing, may depend on their social identities and how much the tools of analysis hold explanatory power for their lived experience. In the next section, I look at the women of color, individually and as a group, to reveal the ways a greater understanding of structure and power gained through the course has resonated with them.

Structures, Power, and the Women of Color

As described in the introduction to this chapter, the learning descriptions of the women of color as a group surprised me. Since my model and teaching practice were honed with an almost exclusively white student population, I had concerns about whether the Feminist-Humanities model would have efficacy for students of color. However, my analysis suggests that the tools of analysis hold more explanatory power than I had imagined. The women of color as a group develop rich analyses about social structures that also take account of how power operates in and through them. For example, Michelle, who identifies as a Black woman, moves solidly into a power analysis on the impact of social constructs in her life. Through her reading of Dowsett (2014), she has learned that:

> … privilege is not so much about one person or group of persons having more 'power' or claiming more 'status' than the next person, as it is about the systemic

imbalance. We live in a world where systems were designed to favor whites over

blacks and purposely keep blacks from climbing up the social ladder. (Michelle,

final paper)

She then closes this section of her final paper by referencing two articles we read about

race and racism (Cheney-Rice, 2015; Smith, 2015). She writes, "A lot of the ignorance of

racial matters plaguing society today is a result of the system," which she says she

learned through Cheney-Rice (2015), which describes how "racism thrives in systems

and practices." Perhaps the curricular model, and the description of racism in this article,

has given Michelle language to explicate her own experience, or at least her observations,

as they are reflected back through course materials, specifically about the ways

hierarchical structures assign unearned privilege based on social identities. It is worth

noting that this revelation is more available to her through examinations of race than

socioeconomic status, as illustrated by her shoe metaphor quoted above about the

necessity to make choices that "fit" our positionality in the socioeconomic system.

Nia, who identifies as a Black woman, also demonstrates a growing structural

understanding of how racism operates, and also through her reading of Cheney-Rice

(2015), about the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity at the University of Oklahoma that was

disbanded in 2015 when a videotape of white members singing a racist song was publicly

leaked. Nia alternately quotes and paraphrases from the article:

'Racists are loud and obvious. Racists can't hide; they trip and reveal

themselves…Racism is a different matter entirely…Racism blossoms in systems

and practices… The frat's national headquarters shut down their Oklahoma

chapter, while University of Oklahoma president David Boren severed all school

ties with the organization. 'You are disgraceful,' he told its members in a highly

publicized statement. What he didn't do was talk about racism. (Nia, final paper)

Although she has taken this almost verbatim from the article, she has located the most

significant passage. Through it, Nia demonstrates an entry point into structural analysis

that allows her to recognize that racism is about much more than individual racist actions,

and that racist systems can be maintained even when everyone denies racist beliefs. She

again paraphrases from the article, "…we've gotten pretty good at spotting racists in

America, and punishing the ones who commit it, but yet we are still tense to openly

discuss the issue." Then, referencing Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, and the Baltimore

Uprising that followed the murder of Freddie Gray, she further paraphrases from the

article, "So until we make a concerted effort to expand our understanding and vocabulary

around racial inequality, we need to stop patting ourselves on the back for the 'progress'

we've made there's still real work to be done." She writes a solid description of racist

systems in contemporary America. And it appears this new understanding of structural

racism is helping her grapple with issues that were previously below her conscious

recognition, based on statements in her first paper saying race is not a significant factor in

her life. However, she has not yet personalized this learning, as evidenced by her abstract

language and paraphrasing directly from the article. She does not connect the article's

insights to her own life experiences.

Whereas Molly, who identifies as a Korean American woman, develops a deeper

understanding of her racial identity, but in ways that are profound and deeply personal.

She writes:

The way my family shaped my views on race is very unique, considering our

situation is different than the norm. Since I am adopted from South Korea, my

appearance is obviously different than my entire [Caucasian, white-identified]

family. Instead of embracing my difference, my parents tried to hide it. Like in

the Colorblindness article [Smith, 2015], they would say things like 'I don't see

that you're Asian' or they would use my race to connect with other Asians. It was

these subtle racist comments and attitudes that shaped me to be hypersensitive

about race. I always noticed it and analyzed how others reacted to it. I would

often try to console in my parents when I faced discrimination, but they could

never empathize with me. Stated in White Privilege [Dowsett, 2014], it is no fault

of themselves, but of the system that we live in. (Molly, final paper)

There is a great deal going on in this passage from Molly, in particular her evolving

understanding of her racial identity, how her family has negotiated it (sometimes hiding

it, and sometimes using it to connect with other Asians), and how it distances her from

her family members. And her statement that her parents have been unable to empathize

with the discrimination she has faced is deeply moving. Thus, it is understandable that

she would be "hypersensitive" to discussions of race, which was clear in her first paper in

a self-protective way that moved beneath the surface of her writing. The deconstruction

of race and racism she engages through course materials has given Molly a language of

analysis to develop insights about her own experiences, particularly around her

discomfort with discussions of race.

Like Michelle, Nia, and Molly, Aisha also begins to understand racial identity and

the structure of racism in new and, like Molly, very personal ways. Aisha writes:

I am from Pakistan which is in Asia, therefore I consider myself Asian…There

have been a lot of times when people have questioned whether or not I was Asian,

just because I did not fit their 'definition' of an Asian person. My features are that

of a Middle Eastern female, which is reasonable because I am from Pakistan, but

a simple question of what race I am would not lead to such details. Before this

class, however, I used to only think of race in terms of what people look at me as.

I never even thought that more than half the time, your race determines how you

are going to be treated. Obviously, being from a different country and ethnicity I

understand that I do not fall into the 'black versus white' debate or racial issues,

but being an 'outsider' is not a safe zone either. (Aisha, final paper)

This is a significant revelation for Aisha: that her race is not just how she identifies,

because it also impacts how she is viewed by others, which then informs how she is

treated. And her statement that "being an 'outsider' is not a safe zone either" is an acute

insight into the ways different racial and ethnic identities operate differently within

oppressive racial systems. She credits watching *The Angry Eye* with helping her develop

this understanding. Watching it, she writes:

I really questioned my race and my role as an outsider when it came to these

debates. I felt disturbed and upset after watching that video. I used to think that

people tend to have certain physical characteristics in mind when looking at a

person in order to determine their race just for the sake of knowing their race, but

it baffles my mind now that I realize that these people are really just trying to see

if you fit their description of someone they are 'allowed' to have in their lives.

(Aisha, final paper)

175

Aisha relates this to how her race impacts her relationships with her friends, based on the reactions of their families to their having a friend with Middle Eastern physical characteristics. Although she does not mention it, I assume this is particularly acute because she has come of age in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. This is a significant realization. Similar to the quotation above from Molly, here Aisha begins to view race as a construct outside herself but also as a thing that attaches to her (Ahmed, 2004a), that influences the way others see and interact with her. And importantly, she gets there through a power analysis. Through this realization, she reconsiders her social interactions. She writes, "Throughout the course of this semester, I have changed my mind about a lot of things regarding how I identify myself and how I want other people to look at me."

Aisha's biculturalism, like Molly's, adds an additional layer to her *complex personhood* (Gordon, 1997), her intersectional identities, and her learning. She writes that her family's identity for her is "Pakistani female," which has strong "family roots" and "ancestral history," but also places limits on her individuality.[84] She writes:

> Foreign families are stricter when it comes to family values and traditions as
> compared to American families. From what I have learned and I am still learning
> is that when people talk about white privilege, it is not always limited to rights in
> the society, but even when it comes to family matters, they are privileged in the
> sense that they do not feel obligated to follow the paths their families have chosen

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[84] She does not speak here specifically of gender, but her gender identity is also moving through the quotations that follow, and it is significant that she writes that her family identifies her as "Pakistani female."

176

for them…It is harder for people of other races to choose paths that their family opposes or is unfamiliar with. (Aisha, final paper)

When it comes to how she negotiates her family's expectations and her biculturalism, she writes:

> …their perception of me is how they want me to be. In other words, I am not exactly what they want me to be, but I do try my best to please both worlds that I am a part of. I see the world with two different perspectives, thanks to them. I see the world from a Pakistani and an American point of view. (Aisha, final paper)

In this passage, Aisha demonstrates an elegant, expanding knowledge of her multiple, intersecting, and conflicting bicultural identities and how her identities inform her family's expectations in ways that can limit her self-expression and opportunities. She refers to this duality as "sometimes a blessing and sometimes a curse." She can see more because of her bicultural identities, but the differing expectations are often in conflict, especially because "when it comes to peers and having a diverse group of friends, defining the right 'thing' to do becomes hard." Through her multiplicity, and—as with other women of color in the class, such as Michelle, Molly, Nia, and Mona—through the course materials, Aisha is developing the language to describe her experience more fully.

Another insight from Aisha deals not with gender, race, or class but with social structures in general. She writes:

> When considering other people's perspective and understanding of your life, you have to consider the possibilities of that understanding being stemmed from the social structures in our society. Growing up, I never really thought how my beliefs, views and behaviors were influenced by the people around me. I used to

177

look at them as things that were 'instilled' in me because that is just the way it was supposed to be. I never questioned myself when it came to how and why I was the way I was. I never asked myself how my identification and understanding of the person I was physically, emotionally and spiritually added to the advantages and disadvantages I received based on how close or far my identification was from positions of power in society. These are big questions, but they answer my questions more in depth than I was originally seeking for. (Aisha, final paper)

This is a significant revelation, as Aisha recognizes her long term socialization from a more expansive perspective that allows her to identify the connections between her individual experiences and the complex and overlapping systems she navigates. Importantly, she now recognizes the influence of power and positionality on her lived experience.

Summary of Shift Two

Although some articulations are tentative while others are quite sophisticated, seventeen of the twenty-four student-participants demonstrate some degree of structural analysis. Although, this is four fewer than those who demonstrated shift one, a sizable percentage of the student-participants have developed some understanding of the ways social structures inform individual behaviors, choices, and experiences. Linking the individual and the social is one of the core aims of the Feminist-Humanities model; thus, there is evidence a majority of students have achieved this learning. What my analysis reveals is the complex ways students' social identities inform how they perform their learning in their final papers. And based on the interaction of their multiple social

178

identities, the features of their learning narratives differ in significant ways. While overall the white-identified student-participants are more likely to revert to neoliberal discourses in their final papers, this also occurs with Michelle, who identifies as a Black woman, through her shoe metaphor in relation to her socioeconomic status. Mark, who identifies as a white man, achieves some significant insights about race and gender, but insights about the limits of the American Dream and the myth of meritocracy may be more difficult for him to achieve because of his economic striving. Therefore, the steps forward and back are deeply influenced by the complexities and contradictions of students' multiple overlapping, intersecting, and colliding identities. This comes into greater relief in shift three, as I discuss in chapter five.

As structures become visible they bring into focus the ways justice and injustice are organized and dispensed based on social identities. And my analysis suggests course materials that create disruptions or enough distance from the familiar object are useful for revealing structural outlines. This is one of many reasons literature is a useful tool. For example in *Animal Farm*, in particular because it is also an analogy with animal actors, the action is different enough from human experience to illuminate the actions of the pigs in ways that might not be as clear to students if the characters were humans acting in expected ways. At the same time, the animals' behaviors are familiar enough for the lessons to resonate. This was especially true when the book discussion was followed in the next class session with *StarPower* to drive home these lessons in another *sticky* (Ahmed, 2004a) way through the experience of power or its lack. While a work of theory, Lorber (1994) does something similar near the end of the article when she says, "I contend, therefore, that the continuing purpose of gender as a modern social institution is

to construct women as a group to be the subordinates of men as a group" (p. 116). This is not what students expect to find as her conclusion; the end demands they reconsider what has come before, and what they think they know about gender relations and their purpose. As the evidence in this chapter suggests, it had real learning impact, especially with the women student-participants. Even though none of their quotations reference this particular statement, it moves beneath their discussions of the article. As Lorber (1994) states, it takes a "deliberate disruption of our expectations" to notice what we see as familiar, what has been normalized, accepted as unquestioned, viewed as inevitable" (p. 112). Many of the *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001) documented in this chapter—shifts one and two—derive from this disruption of expectations: from the stereotyping exercise on the first day, to *StarPowe*r, to the materials used to examine the social constructions of gender, socioeconomic status, and race. This provides strong evidence for the pedagogical potency of disruptions to catalyze shifts in attention. This argument can also be made for shift three—affective analysis—, which I discuss in chapter five.

Conclusion: Shifts One and Two

Using feminist narrative analysis, I investigated the nuances and subtleties of the ground level *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001) that open up students to new possibilities. In shift one, students move into a critically reflective mode of learning, and in shift two, they come to recognize the indelible link and tensions between individual complex persons and social structures. And for those who also apply a power analysis, they develop a growing desire and capacity for real social change. All but three of the student-participants demonstrate evidence of shift one. As the discussion of the first day of class stereotyping activity and the metaphor of the camera lens illustrate, the framing devices

180

of the Feminist-Humanities model proved useful for catalyzing shift one. These devices allow students to look again at what they think they know to ask questions about what they may have missed. This pays dividends throughout the semester. My analysis suggests these hairline fractures have a disruptive energy that allows students to interrogate the accuracy of their assumptions about the social world. As a prerequisite for all future shifts, this is small but potent.

Shift two is the center around which the Feminist-Humanities model is built because it requires students to recognize the influence of social structures on our lives, which links the individual and the social and disrupts neoliberal conditioning. Evidence suggests this makes visible what occurs when complex persons run up against the structures that organize and sort them along hierarchies of power. *StarPower* proved to be a strong pedagogical tool for bringing into relief the ways structure and power inform our opportunities and our behaviors. While seventeen of the twenty-four student-participants demonstrate some understanding of social structures, the number who articulate a power analysis is fewer (10 of the 17). Other than Mark, it is women who make direct reference to the impacts of power, and for the women of color this recognition is stronger. Molly and Aisha in particular demonstrate this, as they wrestle with and push against the ways their gendered and racialized identities constrict their lives. And their biculturalism appears to make possible the depth of their insights, highlighting again the influence of social identities on student learning. The insights of the women of color as a group is something I missed as an instructor and only realized through my data analysis.

It is perhaps not surprising that social identities inform student learning, particularly in a course that examines the ways positionality organizes our lives. And as I

discuss in chapter five, there is strong evidence that the performance of student learning

narratives is connected in significant ways to how each student-participant negotiates the

challenges of the epistemic project in ways that are gendered, raced, and classed. Taking

this information into account during curricular planning and in the choice of course

materials offers opportunities to reach out to students differently and in a variety of ways

that could lead to more significant and more resonant learning for a greater number of

students.

CHAPTER FIVE - Feeling for Change: The pedagogical potency of affective knowledge

Evidence presented in the previous chapter demonstrates that the Feminist-Humanities model has catalyzed shifts one and two for the majority of students: out of twenty-four student-participants, twenty-one demonstrate shift one, and seventeen demonstrate shift two. Shifting first into a reflective mode of learning (Fricker, 2007), most students also began to recognize the *things-behind-the-things* (Gordon, 1997), through their growing knowledge of social structures and how they organize our lives and inform our life experiences. This is significant learning, especially in guiding students to expand their social knowledge and develop a language of analysis that may stick with them long after the course has ended. However, the findings presented in this chapter indicate a third shift that is more remarkable and may also have greater *stickiness* (Ahmed, 2004a). Shift three occurs when affective knowledge connects the individual and the social in a thrust of *transformative recognition* (Gordon, 1997). Evidence also suggests transformative recognition is the bridge I have been seeking that moves students beyond consciousness-raising to build both their *desire* (Fisher, 2001) and capacity to act for transformative social change.

As I discussed in chapter two, the data collection semester is the first time I used affect as an explicit pedagogical tool. And before my data analysis I did not fully grasp its significance within the Feminist-Humanities model. I developed this teaching strategy in response to bell hooks' (1994) statement that we must teach into the discomfort that arises in classroom discussions about issues of justice. My intent was to take the tension created through students' emotional reactions to course materials and use it as an analytic

tool to guide students to examine the collision of social identities and oppressive power structures. As I discussed in chapter two, affective analysis holds great potential for making visible social information that otherwise goes unnoticed. This information illuminates the *hauntings* (Gordon, 1997) on the periphery of our *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007), allowing us to interrogate what the ghosts can tell us about our systems of oppression and opportunities for change.

At the end of the third class session, I asked students to write down adjectives to describe how they felt during the discussion of *Animal Farm*. This was initially met with confusion, and students mentioned they had never before been asked to do this in a class setting. Since we are taught to discount or disregard our emotions (Ahmed, 2004b; Jaggar, 2013), it can be challenging for students to recognize them. Additionally, because the animals in the book are at a remove from humans, students are less likely to react in noticeably emotional ways to this material; although, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, this has some advantages for revealing the outlines of social structures. Introducing this activity after *Animal Farm* was intentional because it has lower emotional stakes than much of the material to come in the curriculum. This allows students to develop an awareness of affect and a language to examine it in advance of more challenging material. To develop this skill, from the third class session forward I asked students to write informally about how they were feeling at the close of each class. I did not collect these writings so students would feel more comfortable with this activity and hopefully be more honest about their feelings. As with any cultural practice, students became more aware of their emotions and more adept at capturing them over time. I also instructed students to write down the emotions they observed during in-class videos and

documentaries so they might practice recognizing and thinking about the meaning of affect in others. Then, in the class discussions that followed, we examined the ways emotions informed the social interactions we observed on screen. This practice shifted and deepened class discussions as students grew more aware of emotions as a source of social information and more comfortable identifying and exploring what made them angry or afraid or sad or hopeful within course materials and activities. For some student-participants—in particular the women, and more precisely the women of color—over time they learned to use emotions as a significant analytic tool. This chapter presents examples of their analyses.

Recognizing sociopolitical structures through shift two makes visible our social gears, which for a few students also illuminated relations of power. However, recognizing structure and even power can still feel abstract. For this reason, the third *shift in attention* (Fisher, 2001) holds the potential to build on the two previous shifts and forge deeper connections between them. Evidence suggests affect is a bridge connecting the individual and the structural to reveal the complex ways those with different social identities experience the world differently. As Sara Ahmed (2004b) says, "We should note that the word 'emotion' comes from the Latin, *emovere*, referring to 'to move, to move out'" (p. 11). Shift three engages affective knowledge that connects the head and the heart and *moves* students to reckon with the need for change beyond their personal experiences. Avery Gordon (1997) says of this feeling, "Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of

feeling[85] of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as transformative

recognition" (Gordon, 1997, p. 8). Those who make this third shift recognize what

Gordon terms the *somethings-to-be-done*. Haunting holds pedagogical potency because

its *stickiness* (Ahmed, 2004a) demands change. And the evidence presented in this

chapter makes the case that this *transformative recognition* (Gordon, 1997) is key to

building students' capacity for social action.

Through students' final papers and transcripts of the focus group conversations I

have identified five of the model's elements that aided students' development of affective

knowledge and the practice of affective analysis. First is the simulation *StarPower*. The

focus on feelings was introduced in the previous class session after the discussion of

Animal Farm, and evidence suggests this discussion of emotions provided a language

students then used the following week to describe and examine their game experiences.

Second, students pointed to the class videos as useful ways to explore how oppressive

structures inform our social interactions and impact our lived experiences. Third, students

identified reflexive writing as an opportunity to wrestle with the reasons behind the

emotions they experienced through course materials, as well as the emotions they

observed in videos and in their classmates during group discussions. Pausing to write

about how they felt at the end of class encouraged students to consider course materials

in new ways. For many this led to deeper and more resonant learning. The pause (Fricker,

2007) of reflexive writing creates an analytic space to wrestle with emotional truth

toward a greater understanding of the lives of others. Importantly, Miranda Fricker

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[85] This is a reference to Raymond Williams' (1977) concept of *structures of feeling:* not yet fully formed feelings that indicate emergent knowledge. This gives further weight to the importance of affective knowledge for pointing a new way forward.

(2007) says the knowledge that develops through the reflective pause can reduce the *credibility deficits* that can otherwise lead to *epistemic injustice*. Fourth, for some students, reading Allan G. Johnsons' (2001) discussion of the change process encouraged them to consider the contributions they could make toward greater social equity. Fifth, in the focus group, students identified the student-teacher relationship at the heart of both feminist pedagogy and the Feminist-Humanities model as instrumental for encouraging them to take up and sit with the challenges of the epistemic project.

I begin with student descriptions of how the course-long focus on emotions impacted their overall learning. This evidence comes from the focus group, and it is important to again note that only women comment on tape. Then I present students' descriptions of the five course elements they saw as aiding their development and use of affective knowledge. I use quotations from students' reflexive writing and focus group conversations to illustrate how these pedagogical interventions encouraged student-participants to consider what emotions could tell them about the intersections and collisions of the individual and the social. In the second half of the chapter, I present my findings about the complex ways their social identities led student-participants to very different course experiences and learning performances. I also discuss a group of three students who largely resisted the challenges of the epistemic project. The affective clues I identified in their final papers, along with their various forms of resistance, suggest a complicated relationship between students' social identities and course learning.

Again, as I discussed in chapter four, one surprise of my analysis is the enthusiastic way the women of color in the class responded to the Feminist-Humanities model. The sharpness of their affective analyses demonstrates a remarkable and

propulsive force for change. By contrast, the male student-participants—in particular, Omar, Arun, Mark, and to a lesser extent Brock, themselves a racially, ethnically, and otherwise diverse group—, resist the challenges of the epistemic project to a greater or lesser degree. They are joined in their resistance by one woman, Sarah, who identifies as white. However, the forms of resistance are different across the male student-participants, while also contrasting in gendered ways with Sarah's resistance. At the end of this chapter, I describe the affective clues I located within the final papers of each of the resisters and the insights they uncovered. I believe these findings offer useful information about the differential impact of identity on student learning through the Feminist-Humanities model and, more broadly, in social justice education.

A Focus on Emotions

Capturing their emotions at the end of class sessions resonated with a majority of the women. And women student-participants provide a wealth of information about the ways a focus on emotions informed their learning. For example, in the section on race in her final paper, Catherine, who identifies as mixed race but also describes herself as largely aligned with her white identity, writes about the "myriad of emotions" she experienced through course materials about the ways her social location and socialization "told me that [injustice] was not an issue, and it was not my problem." She now recognizes how privilege can blind us to the experiences and pain of others. She continues, "When the privileged continue to silence the voices of the browbeaten, the oppression will rage on." Through this statement, Catherine demonstrates a growing recognition that lack of awareness of the suffering of others contributes to their continued oppression.

It is within the focus group conversations that students most clearly articulate how a course-long focus on emotions informed their learning. In their discussion of the small group question about the impact the Feminist-Humanities model's approach to teaching had on their learning, Group One Speaker 3, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, says:

> She [Rachel, the instructor] said on the first day of class, "You're going to feel uncomfortable and your opinions might be different than other people's, but say them anyway because that's what the whole course is about"…She definitely facilitated that. (Speaker 3, focus group)

This demonstrates the pedagogical potency of teaching into discomfort (hooks, 1994) and suggests it may have paved the way for each of the three *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001) by encouraging students to take up and sit with the challenges to come. Speaker 5, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, agrees with Speaker 3 saying:

> If we all didn't do that then there's no way we would have gotten the same material and knowledge than what we did. Because when I was writing my [final] paper, looking at my notes, my notes were so great because they weren't this boring *PowerPoint* bullet point stuff. It was pictures and my feelings, which, at first, when we did the feeling thing…It's like, do we really want to know how I feel? (Speaker 5, focus group)

Leah, who identifies as a white woman, agrees adding, "But then after a while, I liked that part a lot because I wanted to record how the day made me feel and stuff, and that obviously made my part two [final] paper way easier because I could remember how I felt." Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, then adds:

I was like, 'We learned this,' but after a while it was a lot more about how I felt. I

think that's where this course actually got through to us more than other courses

do, because we don't really remember the specifics of every statistic and stuff, but

we remember the way that the course material made us feel. (Elisabeth, focus

group)

As Speaker 5 suggests, there was general reticence when students first began to pause at

the end of class sessions to write about what they were feeling. However, the statements

of these four students suggest the focus on emotions allowed the material to resonate at a

deeper level. The quotation from Leah suggests the practice gave her time to consider her

learning in a new way. And Elisabeth's comment in particular—her use of the word

"remember"—suggests that a focus on emotions may provide the *stickiness* (Ahmed,

2004a) necessary for the analytic tools of the Feminist-Humanities model to have staying

power.

This is mirrored later in the focus group when Taylor, who identifies as a white

woman, talks about what she learned about the usefulness of discomfort. She talks about

my saying to the class that:

…getting uncomfortable, that's, like, when you know change can start to happen.

So you have to be in those moments so that we can…learn from them and grow

from them and have that change. And now we can go forth and hopefully

continue, you know, continue that and bring that change. (Taylor, focus group)

Taylor is referencing my discussion of *the learning edge*.[86] In the first class session, after several students described the awkwardness of the stereotyping activity,[87] I told students that learning is often uncomfortable because it pushes us to a new edge, beyond the bounds of our current knowledge and that this was a normal, even desirable, aspect of learning.[88] And Taylor's comment recalls that although I did not explicitly discuss emotions in the first class session, during the stereotyping exercise we addressed the awkwardness students felt during our class discussion. I encouraged students to notice the awkwardness and give it some thought but not let it curtail their participation. So, from the first class session, I encouraged students to sit with discomfort and consider what was uncomfortable, rather than trying to quickly move past these moments. As I demonstrated in chapter four, this pause during the first class session encouraged most students to move into a reflective mode of learning (Fricker, 2007), and the student evidence I presented suggests this catalyzed shift one but also prepared students for the shifts to come. And an explicit focus on emotions beginning in the third class session introduced feelings as an additional source of information—and eventually, analytic tool—student-participants could use to interrogate both social interactions and their course learning in new ways.

Brianna, who identifies as a white woman, illustrates the pedagogical potency of teaching into discomfort during the focus group. She says:

> I think that so many other classes tiptoe around these issues, and like, don't want to hurt anybody's feelings and don't want to make people want to have emotional

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[86] See Forster, Zimmermann, & Mader (2019). The concept of the *learning edge* is important to the field of education within a comprehensive model of the learning process. In particular, this article discusses the significance of emotions within this process.

[87] See chapter two for a description from my teacher/researcher journal of this stereotyping or automatic social processes exercise and the class discussion that followed.

[88] See also hooks (1994).

responses to stuff. And that's why, that's why, like, everyone is saying, like, we

don't remember anything from those classes because the way that we learn is by

having an emotional response to what we're learning. So that's why this class is

actually going to resonate with us for a long time… (Brianna, focus group)

Brianna, like Elisabeth, talks about "remembering" what she has learned from the course

because a focus on feelings allowed the course material to "resonate." These are *sticky*

words (Ahmed, 2004a) that carry pedagogical weight and indicate a third *shift in*

attention (Fisher, 2001) brought about through affective knowledge. As Sara Ahmed

(2004b) says, "This is not surprising: what is relegated to the margins is often, as we

know from deconstruction, right at the centre of thought itself" (p. 4). By asking

questions about what students are feeling, the Feminist-Humanities model acknowledges

this center and brings it into focus, encouraging students to follow the *hauntings*

(Gordon, 1997) to examine social interactions through their body level effects, then

consider what this information can tell us. Brianna's statement echoes Andrew Simmons

(2016) when he says, "An emotional response should be part of the curriculum." He

argues that emotional responses are significant teaching tools. Student-participants

quoted above have been *impressed* (Ahmed, 2004b) by what they have learned through

paying attention to emotions. This is precisely why Simmons[89] asserts that emotional and

moral rigor are essential components of a humanities education. This is especially true in

a social justice course that aims to build understanding across difference.

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[89] See also chapter two for a discussion of Simmons (2016).

StarPower

As students describe it, an example of affective knowledge building occurred when they played *StarPower*. This was the second class session where I had asked students to focus on their emotions, first during the discussion following the game, and then again in their informal writing at the end of class. This is a pattern I would repeat for the duration of the semester. The reflexive space introduced the previous week, when students captured their emotions following our discussion of *Animal Farm*, appears to have influenced how students thought about *StarPower* and its lessons. This affective consciousness allowed Aisha, who identifies as an Asian woman, to document a potent pedagogical moment in her final paper. She writes:

> I remember when we played *StarPower* in the beginning of the semester. After the game was over, I remember when everyone shared their emotions and how frustrated they were that one group had all the power to change the rules, while they just sat there. I was part of the squares, which meant I had power. There was a lot of hostility and anger in the room. I knew at that point that this was the beginning of the change that this class was about to bring for every single one of us. We were all strangers before this game, but after the game was over and everyone had shared their thoughts, I realized that people started feeling more comfortable speaking in front of each other. Nobody was scared to voice their opinion because we had already gone through this tension that we had to overcome. This opened a door that led to in-class discussions and out of class experiences that I will probably never forget for the rest of my life. (Aisha, final paper)

Echoing students quoted above, twice in this passage, Aisha says the word "remember," and once she says "never forget," as she describes the impact of this moment on her learning, which she further suggests had a similar impact on her classmates. Aisha's keen observation captures what, as she describes it, is as a class-wide *shift in attention* (Fisher, 2001). And the discussions of *StarPower* in the final papers of other student-participants and again in the focus group conversations give further weight to the significance of this moment. As Ahmed (2004b) describes it, this is "the affective opening up of the world through an act of wonder, not as a private act, but as an opening up of what is possible through working together" (p. 181). Working together through the game and the discussion that followed, the class "opened a door," in Aisha's words, and in doing so connected its members in new and surprising ways. The *StarPower* simulation allowed students to feel the ways American capitalism confers opportunities based on socioeconomic identity, how powerful it feels to be in charge of the game, and how we often respond with either anger or apathy when we feel powerless. And, as Aisha suggests, the "tensions" of the game—the "frustration," "hostility," and "anger"—and the opportunity to examine these tensions through emotionally descriptive language in the company of other learners, may have been the key that opened this door.

I quote at length from my teacher/researcher journal where I documented my observations of what was happening in the classroom at the tail end of the game, during the time of the heightened tensions Aisha describes. I wrote:

> When I came back into the classroom [after talking with the Squares in the hallway, where they were busy developing their new rules for the game], I noticed that the Triangles and the Circles were talking about the Squares. I asked what

they were thinking, and Mark said something to the effect that they weren't interested in the rules the Squares were outside making. Mark (Triangle) had become quite animated in the brief time I was outside with the Squares. I then asked the students what they were thinking about the Squares' deliberation. Sarah (Circle) responded that they were going to make unfair rules. Elisabeth (Circle) agreed. Mark was talking with his fellow Triangles, and it was clear he was thinking of insurrection. The Triangles [the middle group] were much more lively than the Circles [bottom group], and they seemed to be discussing what they would do next. I went to talk with the Circles. Their consensus seemed to be that whatever happened wouldn't be in their favor, and it was clear that their motivation to continue playing the game was dwindling. Whereas the Triangles were laughing and talking and making plans of action. This is always an interesting dynamic, and I will pull it out later during our discussion of the game.

The Triangles continued to talk, and then Mark made the announcement to me that he had been kicked out of the game. [Within the rules of *StarPower*, there is a process for a group to remove a disruptive member from the game by unanimous vote.] However, he made it clear that it had been his choice. I had missed this negotiation while I'd been talking with the Circles and also to Michelle [who had played *StarPower* before; therefore, I had enlisted her to help me facilitate the game], so it was only later during our class discussion of the game that I better understood his motivation. (Instructor, teacher/researcher journal, February 18, 2015)

There was a lot happening in these final moments of the game: a variety of dynamics and emotions circulated across the room, between and among individuals and groups. And the emotions students described were quite different depending on their group membership at this time. As demonstrated in chapter four, this simulation was important because it made visible for the majority of student-participants the ways social structures and their power relations influence our lives. However, as Aisha describes in the quotation above, further supported by what I documented in my journal, the game also created a wealth of affective knowledge. Although I captured a lively discussion of the game in my journal, I would have missed the significance of this moment if Aisha had not written about it in her final paper. And while in retrospect I can see that students participated more in class discussions in subsequent class sessions, I likely chalked this up to students settling into the semester and getting used to my teaching, course expectations, and their classmates, rather than a moment of such import.

During the focus group discussion about the model's use of storytelling and counterstories as central course metaphors, Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, after describing her frustration with being stuck as a Circle following an unlucky hand, says about the game:

…I guess it was sort of a counter story because I'm not used to being, like, unfairly put into a group and not being able to get out of it. Um, I guess it just made me realize how hard it is to get out, and it doesn't matter, like, how hard you work to get out of the lower class. You're going to stay in it because of our system…I was under the idealistic impression that you could work really hard and make as much money as you want and get out of poverty if you're in it because

it's a democracy and capitalism and all that. But I don't know. I guess now I feel

really dumb that I thought that, but *StarPower* helped. (Elisabeth, focus group)

There is despair in Elisabeth's words, as she recognizes how painful it is to lack hope, as

well as the way not having felt this before has allowed her to be oblivious to those who

suffer from our unequal power structures. In the same conversation, by contrast, Allison,

who identifies as a white woman, talks about how "awesome" it was to be a Square, and

how "power hungry" she became. She says:

…I'm, like, a nice person in real life. But in that game, I was just like, "Yeah,

like, I need more power!" But, like, that's…changed my percept—, that changed

my perspective of, like, like upper class and the people who have, like, the most

money. Because it's just like, wow, like, they have a lot of money. They could

give some to the Circles if they wanted to—or the lower class, rather…But why

don't they? It's because they want to have it for themselves. Because, like, I

wanted to have it for myself. [Laughter] …I didn't want to help the Circles. It was

so bad. (Allison, focus group)

Through the game, Allison experienced the headiness of power, and specifically how

having power motivates you to keep it and expand it and how this blinds you to the

suffering of others. This is similar to the quotation in the previous section from Catherine

about how her lack of awareness contributes to the maintenance of oppression. In both

cases, this is significant and resonant learning.

The conversation continues as Elisabeth begins talking about Mark (who was

briefly at the focus group meeting but has left long before this discussion) and how the

two of them had both been in the Squares but had fallen into the lower groups [in the

second round of the game, Elisabeth was demoted to the Circles, and Mark was demoted to the Triangles]; she says they were both determined to get back to the Squares. This showed her "how, like, sneaky power can be." When the Squares took charge of the game, they did bring Elisabeth back into their group. They were planning to do the same for Mark; however, at this point he had been kicked out of the game, or chosen to leave it (as he described it to me). Hallie, who identifies as a white woman, and who was then a Triangle, says she:

> …got to see kind of two perspectives of the game because the people that were the Circles were kind of like, "This game is stupid." Like, they essentially didn't care about it because they were, like, Circles. So they're like, "This game is stupid. Like, what's the point in this? This is so frustrating." And they were getting mad at the Squares. But then the Squares, since they were doing so well, they're like, "Why are they taking this so seriously? This is just a game. Like, they need to calm down," and, like, "It's not a big deal." (Hallie, focus group)

Being in the middle group allowed Hallie enough distance to observe the two other groups: those who had absolute power, and those who had lost hope that they might gain power. In her observation, the Circles felt the game was "stupid" and pointless because nothing was going to change for them; they were apathetic because they determined they could not win. Whereas the Squares could not understand why the Circles were taking the game "so seriously." The rush of power blinded the Squares to the feelings of their classmates. Through these dynamics, *StarPower* illuminated how power operates and how it feels differently depending on where your identity falls within its hierarchy.

Again, just as Aisha suggests, Hallie's insights developed through the affect she observed in these final moments of the game.

Elisabeth agrees with Hallie and talks about the chaos that followed and how the Circles, where she was at the time, got very frustrated. She says, "Like, people started cheating and, like, breaking the rules, and like, getting really mad and, like, not caring what people, uh, or not caring about following the rules anymore." Elisabeth then mentions how she did not realize all of this until she was writing about it in her final paper, when she began connecting it to "rioting in Baltimore and stuff because they have no hope. And why not just break all the rules? Because nothing good is happening to them anyway…" An awareness of the emotions generated through the game gave Elisabeth tools to develop more accurate knowledge of real social phenomena. Significantly, her new knowledge holds the power of *transformative recognition* (Gordon, 1997) by making visible the very real pain and hopelessness of oppression.

It is clear from this overwhelming evidence that playing *StarPower* was a significant pedagogical moment. In chapter four I presented evidence that the majority of student-participants—seventeen out of twenty-four—gained knowledge of social structures, and many of the seventeen point to playing *StarPower* as catalyzing their development of this analytic capacity. Several student-participants also gained knowledge about power hierarchies, in particular the women of color, and again *StarPower* is one of the major catalysts for illustrating for students the impact of relations of power on individuals.[90] However, the insights developed from the affect that circulated during

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[90] As I describe in chapter four, ten student-participants demonstrate a power analysis; however, not all of them indicate that they gained this analytic capacity from playing *StarPower*. Lorber (1994) was another important catalyst for this knowledge development, particularly for the women.

StarPower may be key to this *stickiness* (Ahmed, 2004a), creating more resonant learning. From the evidence above, this appears to be because the game created an opportunity for students to feel power differentials and their impacts as well as see these impacts on their classmates. Circle members responded with apathy to a game they felt they could not win. However, feeling closer to power, the Triangles felt they might still improve their situation; therefore, some Triangle members were willing to fight to gain or regain power that felt just beyond their grasp. The Squares were enjoying their power, laughing as they made rules that would allow them to keep and expand it, and they were confused about why the members of the Circles had no interest in learning their new rules and continuing to play the game. There were other fascinating elements occurring. Both Elisabeth and Mark had been in the Squares but had been demoted to another group by the end of the game. They each expressed their frustration with losing power but in quite different ways that led to different behaviors, behaviors likely informed by the norms and expectations of their race and gender.

Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, and Mark, who identifies as a white man, each made clear their feelings about losing status after being demoted from the Squares. Elisabeth expresses disappointment. Her tactic is to "play by the [new] rules" made by the Squares in the hope that they will reward her and let her move back into their group; interestingly, this is what happened. In contrast, after being demoted Mark is outraged; his status and privilege taken from him, he immediately begins plotting to get back to where he feels he belongs. He plans an insurrection and tries to get his fellow Triangles, and some Circle members, to join him. From focus group comments, and what I captured in my journal, it is likely Mark was surprised that he was unable to rouse

200

others to rebel against the Squares' leadership. He was voted out of the game by his fellow Triangles because of his disruptive influence. He assured me this was his choice; having already experienced loss, it is possible Mark wanted to save face by insisting he was still in charge of his fate. It was a fascinating dynamic. Mark's behavior in the game is reminiscent of Stephanie's behavior in *The Angry Eye*: when privileges they are accustomed to are taken away, both Mark and Stephanie are willing to fight for what they see as theirs.[91]

The only other individual comments in my journal about this moment in the game are from Mona and Sarah, as I described in chapter four. Mona, who identifies as mixed race and was in the Circles [bottom group], decided once the Squares gained control of the game that she would no longer play because the Squares were "wasting her time." Recognizing the game was stacked against her, Mona was ready to leave the game and move on to more productive uses of her time. Sarah, who identifies as white and was also a member of the Circles, felt that the Squares would make rules that would benefit only themselves, and she expressed to me her frustration about this turn in the game. As Hallie makes clear in her quotation above, the Circles and Triangles realized they were powerless in a "stupid" game, and the Squares wanted to make sure they kept their power at all cost.[92] In an hour of class time, the dynamics of injustice and their body level effects were made concrete. And student-participants describe their learning from the game as "resonant," and something they will "remember." For these students, affective

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[91] See a more detailed description of Stephanie in *The Angry Eye* documentary in the next section of this chapter, in my discussion on the impact of class videos on student learning.

[92] See chapter four for greater detail about *StarPower*, the dynamics of the game in this group of students, and the comments from Elisabeth, Mark, Mona, Sarah, and Hallie. See also Shirts (1969) for game details and how it is played.

knowledge has connected the individual and the social, and their keen insights about the

game's dynamics have created learning that sticks (Ahmed, 2004a).

Class Videos

Student-participants describe the in-class videos as another useful activity for

developing affective knowledge. As I have previously described, before watching videos,

I asked students to write down the emotions they observed in on-screen participants.

Then, when the videos ended, we took a moment for students to write down how they

were feeling about the video. We used both sets of emotions in the class discussions that

followed. Therefore, emotions were an explicit pedagogical intervention through which

students could develop the comfort, language, and practice to interrogate the influence of

unequal power relationships on our social interactions. Thus, students learned to use

affective knowledge as an explicit analytic tool. Each of the in-class videos—*Role*

Reversal, *Inequality for All*,[93] *What's Race Got to Do with It?*,[94] and *The Angry Eye*—are

mentioned frequently in students' final papers and in the focus group transcripts. To best

illustrate the affective knowledge gained from the videos, I provide evidence from one of

the focus group conversations.

In Focus Group One, students describe the videos as one of the course elements

with the greatest impact on their learning. Their discussion offers insight about how the

videos engaged affective knowledge. Speaker 5, who from context clues likely identifies

as a white woman, says, "With gender, I liked how she [Rachel, the instructor] used the

video [*Role Reversal*]. I feel like using that video was honestly the core foundation of

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[93] Student quotations about *Inequality for All* are presented in chapter four as evidence of their learning about the structure of socioeconomic status in America.
[94] See discussion of *What's Race Got to Do with It?* during a focus group conversation presented later in this chapter.

learning about gender." Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, agrees and says for her this also extends to the other class videos and documentaries. She says, "A lot of them [the videos], those were the parts that really made me connect to it and feel emotional about the material." Then Speaker 5, continues:

> Yeah. Those were definitely the most effective. If we didn't have those videos, there's no way we would've gotten the same reaction. Because the *Role Reversal* video, and the one where Stephanie the bandana girl with the blue eye and brown eye experiment situation [*The Angry Eye*], if we didn't see that, we wouldn't have understood white privilege… (Speaker 5, focus group)

Nia, who identifies as a Black woman, replies saying, "Oh my gosh, that video [*The Angry Eye*] was crazy!" Speaker 3, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, agrees saying, "It was. I would say that is the example that I would use as the most significant idea that I got from the course. Because I remember being really upset watching it." Speaker 3 connects the feeling of being "upset" while watching the video to its resonance. And again, like Elisabeth's earlier quotation, Speaker 3 uses the word "remember" in conjunction with this emotional response.

Several students were moved by Stephanie's behavior in *The Angry Eye*. Stephanie is a white college student who participates in the race reversal simulation documented in the video. She reacts with anger when she feels the facilitator, Jane Elliott, is treating her unfairly. This leads to an extended confrontation between Stephanie and Elliott, during which Stephanie eventually decides to leave the game. When she later tries to return, Elliott tells her to do so she "must first apologize to every person of color in this room" because she has exercised "a choice they do not have" because "they cannot

just walk out on racism when it becomes too much for them." Stephanie offers a defensive blanket apology saying, "I'm sorry that racism exists in this world…," which Elliott interrupts and dismisses, telling Stephanie she must again leave the game because she has refused to apologize for *her* behavior and the privilege it enacts. Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman (as does Stephanie) says in her final paper that, like Stephanie, she felt "emotionally triggered" by Elliott's "meanness" in her role as facilitator of the simulation. But she calls this the course element with "the most profound impact" on her because she was able to experience what it felt like to be "treated unfairly for no reason." As Gordon (1997) says, affective analysis takes account of what is missing, what is at the margins, the unacknowledged *ghostly matter* of our social interactions. Stephanie reflects back to Elisabeth the white experience when faced with the pain of racism. Through this reversal, Elisabeth, like Stephanie, feels this pain, likely in a way that is a new and surprising experience.

In chapter four, I discussed the knowledge about social structures student-participants achieved from watching this documentary. However, this focus group conversation suggests the emotional charge of the video may be key to its resonance. When it ended, I asked students to write three to five descriptors for how they were feeling, and there were a lot of feelings circulating: the tension was electric. I followed this with an in-depth discussion I kicked off by asking students to think more deeply about their chosen adjectives. I asked, *What makes us angry? What makes us sad? What feels challenging?* And Stephanie is an important actor in the documentary because she illustrates the white experience when for the first time they are on the receiving end of racial oppression. Stephanie says she is leaving because she "won't play the wrong game

anymore." During the class discussion, I said Stephanie has a point because the game is unfair. Stephanie recognizes the unfairness in this moment because it is directed at her, although she is, at least in this moment, unable to connect her feelings to what the people of color in the room describe as a common experience for them. For the student-participants, discussing Stephanie's anger and frustration—the reasons she leaves the game, and the reasons the students of color in the room laugh at her—creates new and palpable knowledge of racial oppression. For this reason, this video was an entry point to explore how emotions are telling us something: when something is right, or when something is wrong (Jaggar, 2013/1989). This foundation allowed some student-participants to consider emotions as a barometer of lived experience and to recognize their analytic heft.

For example, in her final paper, Allison, who identifies as a white woman, describes her experience watching *The Angry Eye*. She writes:

> The video that impacted me the most in regards to race is the Jane Eliot [sic] video. I think that it impacted me as much as it did because of how emotionally charged the video was. This is especially true when Stephanie walks out of the room and said: 'I won't play that wrong game anymore.' Watching this video made me feel angry, sad, and hopeless. I felt both angry and sad, because I do not know what it feels like to be discriminated against because of my race, and I never will. (Allison, final paper)

However, perhaps watching the video gave Allison an opportunity to feel racial oppression, even if she is doing so in a classroom: a safe place at a safe distance from its

real life impacts. And like the other students, Allison uses affective language to describe her learning.

It is interesting that both Nia and Michelle, both of whom identify as Black women, also describe watching *The Angry Eye* as an important moment in the course. In the focus group, Nia talks about the emotions on display in this video and what they led her to recognize. She says:

> It was touchy to watch because I kind of felt that. But at the same time, it was really understanding where everybody comes from a different—people perceive things differently, I should say. So you kind of get a feel of what other people go through. (Nia, focus group)

Perhaps the race reversal heightens these differences because what we see is not what we expect to see, allowing student-participants to step back and more deeply consider the dynamics of oppression and privilege and how they play out during social interactions. This supports the model's aim to disrupt students' expectations. Importantly, this is not simply an abstract understanding that perspectives and experiences differ; rather, the watching students feel those differences and the tensions they create within their own bodies, perhaps also forging connections to times when they have felt this way before. The emotional truth of these moments resonates with students.

Michelle, who identifies as a Black woman, writes about the video in her final paper, and she offers some insight into why so many of the student-participants describe it as an important learning moment. It is an opportunity to interrogate the operations of whiteness, operations that often go unnoticed because they are common. Michelle writes:

In watching *The Angry Eye* by Jane Elliot [sic] I personally felt very angry and

emotionally disturbed. The video proved my assumption that generally, white

people do not understand how black people do because they've never had to. I

don't believe that Jane Elliot's [sic] intention was to make those students feel the

years of pain that we as a people have felt, rather I believe that she wanted to

decrease the level of ignorance about race/racism among the white community. In

the video, two important points were raised [by Elliott] about the privilege that

white people have – the freedom to not learn about those who aren't white and the

freedom to deny their own ignorance. Although I was disappointed watching this

documentary, I appreciated Jane's work in doing this in a 'mean, nasty way

because racism, sexism, etc. is mean and nasty.' (Michelle, final paper)

Stephanie demonstrates the ways the racially privileged protect themselves from

examinations of how race operates. In doing so, she also points out that racism is "the

wrong game." The student-participant quotations presented above suggest watching her

allows white students to see their own behavior to protect themselves from honest,

painful discussions about the impact of racism and its potential solutions. In trying to

avoid the discomfort, Stephanie becomes the impediment to change. Through quotations

from Nia and Michelle, it is also clear that Stephanie's actions have explanatory power

for the Black student-participants, particularly around the operations of whiteness. This

further underscores the importance of teaching into discomfort (hooks, 1994) in the social

justice classroom. Gordon (1997) says an emotional charge indicates a *haunting* has

occurred. Teaching into the discomfort created by the haunting and following its ghosts

allows us to release the knowledge they hold.

However, Neil Postman (1985) critiques the use of videos in academic settings specifically because, as he describes it, visual media surfaces emotion, even traffics in emotion. He is critical of the use of visual media in classrooms because he considers surfacing emotion to be an inferior form of learning to the intellectual complexity and rigor of reading. His argument is an important one; at the same time, as student-participants demonstrate through the quotations above, the videos can be effective learning tools, and surfacing emotion may be key to their potential. Of course, since Postman published this work in 1985, visual media has become omnipresent in learning environments.[95] Thus, for current undergraduates, visual media is a reality of their lives and educational experiences. For this reason, media literacy is widely considered an essential component of a humanities education. Postman's argument is that visual media lacks intellectual rigor, and further, that it conflates learning with amusement, diminishing the challenge learning is intended to create. However, the theoretical framework of the Feminist-Humanities model contends that intellectual rigor is essential but not sufficient in social justice curricula. I argue that emotional rigor is another essential component of a humanities education,[96] especially within a curriculum that aims to build understanding across difference. As we see in the quotations above, student-participants often describe how the videos helped them better understand the experiences of others. Perhaps the videos offer an opportunity for students to see social dynamics in action and apply what they have learned from their reading. And based on the student-

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[95] Lance Strate (2014) discusses the increased reliance on visual media in the classroom. He revisits Postman's argument and makes the claim for its continued relevance.
[96] See also Simmons (2016) and my discussion of this work in chapter two.

participant evidence in this chapter, learning to recognize emotions in others and to examine how they inform social interactions appears to contribute to emotional literacy.

Postman's (1985) critique is that emotions are not analysis. Ahmed (2004a & 2004b) would agree, and this critique is at the heart of her argument, as well. Intellectual rigor is contained not in surfacing emotions but in using them as analytic tools. This is a core aim of the Feminist-Humanities model. The videos cannot stand alone. Rather it is because the curricular model connects the readings and the videos, the cognitive and the affective, and interrogates them together through classroom discussions and reflexive writing that new knowledge emerges. After learning about concepts through readings, videos provide useful opportunities to observe oppression in action, to bring the differences of lived experience into relief. Then students are able to consider how these acts create feelings and analyze the complex ways these feelings influence social interactions. Used in this way, the videos become a laboratory for studying the social dynamics of difference and their consequences, and reflexive writing becomes the journal where learners capture their observations and feelings to interrogate their meaning. Significantly, studying interactions, rather than participating in them, provides enough distance for students to recognize what otherwise might be obscured by their involvement. And the careful calibration of observing and interrogating social phenomena supports students' development of cognitive and affective capacities, paving the way for students to bring them together in moments of *transformative recognition* (Gordon, 1997).

A recent article by *Washington Post* film critic Ann Hornaday (2022) addresses the usefulness of film and video in the classroom because of the affective power of the

medium and its ability to make the abstract both visceral and concrete. Hornaday echoes

Simmons (2016) when she writes, "…it's not just okay but mandatory to put feelings

front and center" when discussing "history, privilege and bias." Near the end of the

article, she writes:

> Cinema isn't just a visual or aural medium. It's also an emotional one, burrowing
>
> into viewers' consciousness — even their bodies — in a way that can
>
> permanently change their perception and lives. That's what makes it so powerful,
>
> and so threatening to those who would prefer that uncomfortable truths and
>
> challenging information be ignored in favor of triumphalist, feel-good myths.
>
> (Hornaday, 2022)

Hornaday makes a compelling argument for the potency of visual media in the social

justice classroom that further explains why the class videos have resonated for so many

of the student-participants. Again, their power within the Feminist-Humanities model is

not just about watching the videos. Rather, integral to their pedagogical potency is paving

the way through explanatory readings, a course-long focus on emotions, instructions for

students to observe emotional impacts as they watch, and opportunities to interrogate

these impacts both in the class discussions that follow the videos and again in their

reflexive writing. This scaffolding builds students' capacity for affective analysis and lets

them practice it.

Reflexive Writing

The third tool of the Feminist-Humanities model that student-participants describe

as aiding their development of affective knowledge is the informal reflexive writing

assignments completed during class sessions. As described in detail in chapter two,

writing is a key component of the curricular model. I argue that its process orientation—the space and time to wrestle with the challenges of the epistemic project—is key to the model's success. The reflexive, writing-to-learn assignments at the end of class sessions create a space for students to capture and interrogate their thoughts and insights on the day's learning activities. This writing captures the messiness of consciousness-raising, unlearning and relearning, and the challenge of interrogating painful truths. From the third class session forward, student-participants were asked to first describe their emotions within this writing practice, and to think about why they felt this way. As such, this exercise is central to how the Feminist-Humanities model explicitly connects the cognitive and the affective.

In the focus group Erin, who identifies as a white woman, says capturing her emotions encouraged her to consider what was making her uncomfortable. In the large group discussion, she says:

> …after the videos and stuff, she [Rachel, the instructor] would ask us to, like, think and I would realize, like, how, like, pissed off or uncomfortable I was in class. But I never would have, like, thought about it during her lectures if she didn't ask us to pause and, like, think about how I'm feeling personally. (Erin, focus group)

This is important because, as both Ahmed (2004b) and Jaggar (2013/1989) say, we are taught to discount our emotions. Thus, without an explicit, intentional pause to identify and consider their emotions, students might not have noticed this information, this *ghostly matter* (Gordon, 1997). Michelle, who identifies as a Black woman, describes the usefulness of this writing exercise saying:

Um, I feel like writing down my emotions and paying attention to my emotions

helped me to connect with, like, my experiences more. Because I found, like, a lot

of times when she had us write down how we were feeling, like, I was

questioning why I was feeling that way. (Michelle, focus group)

Writing about her emotions helped Michelle reflect on her experiences and examine them in new ways. Within the same conversation, Aisha, who identifies as an Asian woman, agrees with Michelle saying when she wrote it down, what she was feeling surprised her, and surprise is an important element of learning because it shifts our attention, it leads us to *wonder* about other possibilities (Ahmed, 2004b). I believe wonder, as Ahmed describes it, is the cognitive component: the thinking about the feelings and what they are telling us. As I described above, bringing the two together is the intersection where new knowledge emerges. As Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, says a little later in this conversation, "I think the instance where writing down my emotions helped me the most to realize something…the cause of my emotions is what I didn't [previously] understand at all." Here she is speaking of her emotional reaction to *The Angry Eye* video, particularly how mean she felt Jane Elliott was to several of the participants. Elisabeth says:

…but after our discussion and talking about how we feel and stuff, I was like,

Wow. I, like, I feel that way because I have never been mistreated based on my

race before…And that was probably the most influential part of the class for me.

(Elisabeth, focus group)

In this sentence, Elisabeth illustrates the insight that develops when she brings together the cognitive and the affective. Through her emotional reaction to the video, Elisabeth

developed awareness of the pain of oppression. However, it is through her writing about her emotions that her insight develops. Without this practice, Elisabeth might not have paid attention to affective information and its learning potential. Importantly, by feeling the injustice *and* then wrestling with it in her writing, the reflective pause (Fricker, 2007) allows Elisabeth to develop transformational learning, the kind of learning Fricker says can interrupt *epistemic injustice*.

In the focus group's large group discussion, there is another long exchange among several students that exemplifies the analytic potential of reflexive writing. Mona, who identifies as a Black woman, discusses the essays students wrote at the beginning of each class session to demonstrate that they had completed the required readings for the day. She says:

> Um, for the writing process, the in class essays, the very first one, I was more so just talking, like, I went in order for the articles because we were supposed to mention each article that we read. And I would just go in order, just ticking them off…making sure that I completed it. And it was just pretty much what we discussed in class. But towards the last one, I was more so actually putting, um, I was actually connecting it with my life. And I was actually—I wasn't going in order. I was just pulling out, like, pulling the articles from different pieces and actually writing something that wasn't just about what we'd discussed in class, but it was one further than that. It was more analysis to it. And I thought it was pretty interesting how it completely changed the way I was writing. (Mona, focus group)

213

Heidi [focus group facilitator] reflects back to her and says, "So it kind of evolved from getting it done to really this thoughtful process." Mona agrees. She has learned to analyze the readings, to examine them in relation to each other and to her life experiences. This demonstrates the way writing to learn can support critical reflection and allow students to synthesize their learning. Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, agrees with Mona saying:

> I definitely think that, um, taking all of those articles and needing to put them together in, like, a coherent essay, like, definitely, like, made me realize how the structures and the systems that we live in, like, dictate every aspect of how we do things. (Elisabeth, focus group)

The system becomes visible to Elisabeth through writing about the collected readings and recognizing the connections among them; in this case, she is speaking specifically about the gendered system. As Heidi says in responding to her statement, the writing helped Elisabeth "synthesize those big ideas." And Mona recognized how her writing transformed over time from reporting on her reading into an analytic practice. Brianna, who identifies as a white woman, also talks about the impact of the informal writing assignments during Group Three's discussion of the elements of the course with the greatest impact on their learning. She says:

> Um…I really like that we, um, she approached it with doing a lot of writings— informal writings, because I'm better at writing than speaking. And, um, I could write more than what I would say, like, in front of the class. Um, and I liked that we didn't have, like, exams and stuff like that. (Brianna, focus group)

Informal, in-class reflexive writing gave Brianna the opportunity to think more deeply in a space that felt more comfortable for her than speaking in class. And both Mona and Elisabeth gained analytic tools through their interrogation of course materials—and their reactions to them—through the evolution of their reflexive writing practice. The evidence of this focus group conversation underscores the significance of writing as a central curricular tool—in particular the weekly informal writings, which were not included as data sources in this dissertation. Class discussions are important but not sufficient because not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of others, and not everyone is fully engaged in class discussions. And in-class reflexive writing not only carves out the space and time for students to think critically but it also requires each student to do so.

The focus group conversations highlight several elements of the design of the Feminist-Humanities curricular model and how they come together to support student learning. It is clear from student quotations that the space created by the informal writing assignments, both at the beginning of class (about the readings) and at the end of class (about the emotions students experienced or observed during class and thoughts about what they learned that day) pave the way, overtime, for deep critical reflection and an opportunity to wrestle with the challenges of new knowledge. I collected and provided feedback on the informal writing about the readings completed at the beginning of class. However, grading was generous, based on effort and demonstration that students had completed the readings. Collecting these readings also gave me important information about how students were learning and what I might need to further address in class. Based on course evaluations and focus group conversations, students perceived this approach as fair, an opportunity to wrestle with ideas without being concerned about

getting the right answer, and without concern for how it would be graded. I did not

collect the informal writing completed at the end of class about students' emotional

reactions to give students the freedom to write about feelings without concern that they

would be judged. The evidence in this chapter suggests this space was indeed useful and

important. For several students this writing makes its way into their final learning

analyses.[97] Available evidence suggests the structure, design, and sequencing of the

writing assignments, formal and informal, have analytic heft, guiding students to wrestle

with, connect, synthesize, and articulate their learning.

How the Model's Elements Work Together

The Feminist-Humanities model uses a variety of course materials, pedagogical

strategies, and intentional sequencing to layer multiple and different opportunities for

students to observe, interrogate, experience, and reflect on its core concepts. Variety

keeps students' attention, and students learn differently. The redundancy also reinforces

new concepts, examining them from varying perspectives in a thoughtful scaffolding that

introduces students to new tools of analysis and then gives them opportunities to apply

them. For example, *Animal Farm* introduces power structures, *StarPower* lets students

experience them in action, explanatory scholarship defines and fleshes out the concept

(Pincus, 2011), counterstories put a face to its real-world impacts (Swarns, 2014), videos

give students opportunities to observe these impacts (*Inequality for All*), and reflexive

writing brings together each of these sources of information to ask what their connections

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[97] I am left wondering if these informal writings could have offered another useful data source for this investigation into the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model on student learning, in particular about students' struggles to learn. Using only formal, graded assignments and an audiotaped focus group imposed a level of formality and surveillance on the data collection that could have constrained what was captured. Examining informal, ungraded assignments could have offered access to less filtered, less curated moments in the student learning process.

reveal about our social operations.[98] This variety and confluence encourages complex and nuanced learning and reinforces its stickiness (Ahmed, 2004a).

During the focus group, student-participants underscore the importance of this scaffolding, variety, and redundancy for their learning. In Group One, Speaker 5, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, comments on how much they liked the games, especially *StarPower*, then says, "And it was just nice to do it so we can actually have a real experience to see how we feel and how others feel." This suggests experiential learning catalyzes affective knowledge, in particular because it builds students' capacity for affective analysis. Key to the effectiveness of experiential learning is the way it surfaces affect. And the comments from other students, both in their final papers but especially in the focus group conversations, suggest *StarPower* was an especially potent pedagogical moment because of the affective knowledge it made available. Leah, who identifies as a white woman, responds to Speaker 5's comment and says:

> Yeah. That was a really cool thing that she [Rachel, the instructor] did constantly, is try to incorporate our experience with the course material, which I feel like a lot of teachers don't do by playing games like that and giving us examples like the one with the chair [referring to a demonstration I did in class to illustrate the difference between equality and equity]. She was always showing how it happens, not just telling us. (Leah, focus group)

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[98] Comments from Mona, Elisabeth, and Brianna provide evidence of the important connections developed through formal and informal reflexive writing through their focus group conversation presented earlier in this chapter.

Leah's comment suggests experiential learning is resonant because it brings students into the course material through opportunities to experience—to feel—oppression or inequity in more direct and relevant ways. As Molly says:

> I liked that we did, like, quite a few activities in the class. Like I liked that we weren't just sitting there and…I don't know, taking tests or whatever. Like, we were trying to experience this more, instead of just talking all hypothetical.
>
> (Molly, focus group)

Taylor adds, "…Rachel approached it a lot deeper and got you thinking a lot more than the other professors that I've come across."

StarPower appears to be especially effective from the evidence in both students' final papers and the focus group feedback. The lessons learned from this simulation of power and oppression resonate deeply with students, and they refer to them again and again. But the feedback during the focus groups suggests that watching the videos also created a deeper level of connection to course material. In both cases—the game and the videos—affect is key to the learning that develops. The strength of the Feminist-Humanities model is in the careful calibration of conceptual and applied learning, and cognitive and affective analysis, and writing assignments further deepen, support, and continue the reflexive loop. However, evidence points to affective analysis as the connective tissue that allows students to feel what others feel and use this information to develop more accurate social knowledge. This suggests surfacing affect is an integral part of the reason that experiential learning resonates, and this is likely also the case for the connection between affect and the videos. Students feel the lessons of these activities in their bodies; they feel the tensions of unequal power dynamics. This is learning across

difference, and it holds the potential for *sticky* learning (Ahmed, 2004a) and *transformative recognition* (Gordon, 1997).

Learning Together and Transformative Recognition

The focus group conversations were a unique opportunity to listen as student-participants described their learning, to themselves and each other. And because this is a process they are doing together, they remind each other of course elements some had forgotten and thus not captured in their final papers. As such, the focus group became a learning tool I had not anticipated. For example, Group One talks about their experiences with teachers being mean to them. This becomes an extended discussion about race through which students use the analytic language learned through the course to examine together their different high school experiences based on their race and the racial makeup of their schools. During this discussion, Nia, who identifies as a Black woman, describes a confrontation she had with one of the university's police officers. Talking to Nia about this interaction, Speaker 5, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, asks, "Was it a white male cop…?" And Nia responds that it was. Speaker 5 then says:

> And that's so sad to assume that. It could have been a female or it could have been—it's not a black cop, it could have been a Hispanic cop. Nope, it was a white male, and that was assumed. That's so bad to say that. (Speaker 5, focus group)

Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, agrees and says:

> Yeah. And that's the kind of stuff that I didn't really think about that much before this class. I mean, well, I guess for the past year—well, couple years, it's been on the rise. What would you say? Acknowledging that kind of stuff, but I guess I just

219

never really…realized that it was a very real thing that happens every day, not just

in faraway places. Especially in [nearby urban area] and stuff. (Elisabeth, focus

group)

The way this conversation plays out, as students connect course material to their lives,

offers insight into how students are processing what they have learned and what they now

see differently.

Another fascinating conversation occurs in Group One as they respond to the

question asking them to reflect on if and how course materials have helped them make

sense of events surrounding the Baltimore Uprising following the death of Freddie Gray.

Speaker 5, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, says, "Oh, God.

Most definitely. Oh my gosh. Like knowing about why African Americans are uprising at

the police makes so much more sense now, because if I didn't take this class, I'd just be

like, 'Oh, they're just mad.'" Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, agrees, saying,

"I'd be along with everyone else saying like, 'Oh, why are they burning down the city?'

You know? And now I realize that is a pretty ignorant take on it." This is followed by an

extended discussion of how student-participants saw others respond to the Uprising on

social media. Students bring in a couple of the course materials that helped them make

sense of events and better analyze the dynamics of the conversations they hear around

them. One article about colorblind racism (Smith, 2015) helped students understand the

nature of privilege. Speaker 3, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman,

relates it to Johnson's (2001) discussion about how recognizing your level of privilege

can help you use it in a positive way to develop understanding and recognize the

necessity for change. Nia, who identifies as a Black woman, relates it to what she learned

from David in *What's Race Got to Do with It?*. David, a Hispanic man, is an important participant in this documentary because he describes the long-term impact of oppression. As Nia says, he talks about being "pushed," and she relates this to the participants in the Baltimore Uprising. Building from Nia's comment about David and reflecting back on the Uprising, Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, says:

> Yeah. I feel like they just feel like they've had enough. Even if it wasn't about race and the whole police brutality, I think they've just had enough. So obviously, people are going to act a certain way now because they're tired of being treated a certain way. It's cause and effect. (Elisabeth, focus group)

Following this discussion, several speakers mention the media's focus on the violence while ignoring the peaceful protests. Speaker 3, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, says, "Honestly, I don't know what I would think if I wasn't in this class while that happened." Speaker 10, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, says, "I think our perceptions would be totally different, honestly." The students in this small group are wrestling with their thoughts about the Uprising, as they use course materials to counter the representations in the media and the casually racist reactions from their friends and others who they see comment on social media. The Feminist-Humanities model has provided students with tools of analysis to identify media bias and racist comments, as well as a way to better understand the actions of protestors. In the words of David from *What's Race Got to do with It?*, the students are learning to recognize how long term oppression "pushes" people and how the buildup of

disappointment, frustration, and anger can erupt into events such as the Baltimore Uprising.[99]

Group Two has a similar if briefer discussion on this topic. Speaker 11, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, says:

> …I think that just talking about how the media portrays everything and makes you view everything a certain way, that makes everything click because they were showing—it wasn't even biased news stations. Fox, CNN, and local news stations were all showing the riots and completely ignoring the peaceful protests. But, yeah, I thought the media was really, really biased and didn't show the whole side of it. And it makes sense now when we're talking about how the media wants to portray certain communities and certain people in specific ways. (Speaker 11, focus group)

Speaker 13, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, agrees and expands on this by citing a framing device of the curriculum. They say, "That goes along with the small lens and the big lens, trying to open up our lens more. The media makes us only see the small lens, but we need to look outside of that." Through this quotation Speaker 13 demonstrates their achievement of a major aim of the curriculum: to encourage students to expand their social knowledge by looking for the counterstories. Clearly student-participants in this conversation have moved into a reflective mode of learning and are using the model's analytic tools. Their expanding lens lets them view the larger social context for a more sophisticated and nuanced interpretation of social

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[99] David's statement about being pushed can be connected to Ahmed's (2004b) etymology of the word *emotion* and its connection to the idea of being *impressed* or *pressed on* (p. 11).

phenomena, such as the Baltimore Uprising, by taking account of multiple perspectives to develop more accurate knowledge. The *multilogue* (Gorelick, 1996/1991) built through course materials has had a positive impact on students' analytic capacity.

Group One references an article students read about the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity at the University of Oklahoma (Cheney-Rice, 2015) within their discussion about making social change. Speaker 5, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, says, "It's like the difference between racists and racism. That's what the SAE fraternity, when they sang that really bad song about Black people and stuff like that. Which was, oh my God, that was horrific." This leads to an extended discussion about the video (which is embedded in the article) and the difference between *racism* and *racists*; differentiating between these two terms and how they operate is the article's main aim. Leah, who identifies as a white woman, says:

> And it's their chant. And they didn't start that chant at that school. And it's probably, I mean, I don't know, but it's one of those things that maybe they don't even think it, like personally think that way, but they're singing it because it's one of those old songs. (Leah, focus group)

Speaker 5 agrees and says, "Oh, they're taught that from back in the day, like every generation." Nia, who identifies as a Black woman, agrees saying, "I think they're the only people who got caught singing it." Elisabeth, who identifies as a white woman, agrees and demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the critique at the core of the article when she says:

> Right. Well, that's the thing is our system has been based on racist policies and whatever. Just built up with racists at its roots—or racism at its—for so long that

223

these are just the trickling down like what happens based on that. And we punish

that and condemn those people as racists all the time, but we don't even recognize

the fact that it's not them who are the problem. (Elisabeth, focus group)

Through this quotation Elisabeth demonstrates her new understanding of the difference

between individual actions that are racist and the larger raced system in which we are all

actors. Leah, who identifies as a white woman, builds on her analysis saying:

And that just tells other fraternities not so much like, "Oh, change the way you

view society. Don't be racists." It just says like, "don't say that word on paper"

[or in this case, on video]. "Don't do any of that stuff, and then you can't post

anything on social media." And it's not going to change those kids as a person.

They're not going to go, "You know what? I see the world so differently now that

I got in trouble." They're like, "Okay, I'm deleting all social media. I'm never

[putting] anything on camera." (Leah, focus group)

Elisabeth agrees and says, "And yeah, we're addressing it at the lowest levels…It's like

quick patches…" This exchange demonstrates a deft analysis of the impact of the censure

of racist acts such as those captured in this SAE fraternity video. As both Leah and

Elisabeth articulate, disbanding the fraternity (as the University of Oklahoma does in

response to this viral video) and punishing the individual actors does little to change our

racialized system. In fact, it may have the opposite effect by suggesting something is

being done to correct racism. Meanwhile, as Leah points out, the main lesson learned by

the fraternity brothers is to make sure their behavior is not captured so it does not go

viral. And, as Elisabeth says, echoing language used in her final paper, this only

addresses the issue at "the lowest level," by which she means the individual level without

224

recognition of the systemic influence. The student-participants in this discussion demonstrate their new understanding of how this censure punishes individuals while leaving the racist system unchallenged. Importantly, their discussion brings together cognitive and affective information in a deft affective analysis, as they develop more expansive and accurate knowledge about how race, structure, and power operate.

For example, within the discussion of emotions in the larger group, there is a productive exchange between Erin, who identifies as a white woman, and Mona, who identifies as a mixed race woman. Erin says before taking this course discussing race made her uncomfortable. Mona asks Erin, "Why did you feel uncomfortable discussing about, like, when the conversation was on race?" Erin responds, "I guess I've just been taught my whole life, like, you don't talk about other people's races." Speaker 2, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, then references the course reading about colorblind racism (Smith, 2015) and how Millennials have been taught to ignore race. Hallie, who identifies as a white woman, responds saying, "I used to be kind of ignorant to the fact that racism even still exists." Admitting this in the company of her classmates is significant. Hallie was visibly uncomfortable with conversations about race early in the semester, and her statement here makes it clear how far she has come in developing a language that allows her to stay with these conversations and recognize their importance. Hallie further demonstrates this in a discussion about the media and "white police officers killing black people." She describes the consciousness-raising process when she says:

> …I would always just in my mind be like, "Why do they have to make everything
> about race?" But now it's like, "Everything is about race! They're not making it

225

about race. It is about race." So it's like that kind of broadened my horizons; it

kind of opened my eyes. And I was just, like, I feel like I'm in, I've been in a daze

for the past 18 years, and I just kind of got snapped into reality. (Hallie, focus

group)

Following this, Mona describes how different her experience has been because race has

always been a factor for her. She says, "I mean, it's always something that I've been

taking into account." This conversation is a strong example of the power of talking

together about their learning as they use it to examine the patterns and differences across

their individual experiences. The curricular model has provided students with the

language and reflexive skill to hold productive discussions and put differing perspectives

together to examine larger truths about our social structures and their differential impacts

based on social identities. And significantly, this occurred during the focus group

conversations because students have learned through classroom practice to stay with the

conversation when it becomes uncomfortable and when it touches on subjects they

previously considered taboo.

Modeling Change

There are two more components of the curricular model that student-participants

describe as having a significant impact on their course learning; both demonstrate

emergent affective knowledge and underscore the theoretical significance of *for-ness*

(Ahmed, 2004b). They are Allan G. Johnson's (2001) discussion of the change process,

and the ethical stance of feminist pedagogy. The last section of the final paper asked

students to articulate active steps they could take toward positive social change. To

ground and frame their responses, students read Johnson (2001), which considers

common arguments for inaction and dispels the myths that surround them. We had a robust and thoughtful class discussion about this work in our final class session. And writing about the article in their final papers gave student-participants an opportunity to synthesize their course learning and consider how they might move forward differently. For example, in her final paper, Molly, who identifies as a Korean American woman, writes:

> Knowledge is power because it lets us change. By educating myself about the issues in society, I can better educate others. In order to do that, I must prepare myself for a lot of uncomfortable situations. There is so much complexity beyond my personal lens. Instead of feeling guilty about my mistakes, I can that [sic] [take?] those feelings and learn from them. (Molly, final paper)

In these three sentences, Molly uses several analytic words from the model. She embraces the discomfort of change. She also acknowledges the "complexity" beyond her personal experience and the "power" of "knowledge." This suggests growth and an expansion of both what she sees and what she thinks she can do going forward. Like Aisha's and Michelle's final papers, Molly also demonstrates both sureness and forward momentum. She has begun to grasp the power of affective analysis. She closes with a willingness to continue to learn about what these "uncomfortable situations" can tell her. Using similar language, in her final paper, Michelle, who identifies as a Black woman, considers what to do with her new knowledge. She writes:

> Yes, knowledge is power, but applied knowledge is more powerful…Further, sharing my knowledge with others can have an enormous impact on the world. Johnson states that 'silence and invisibility allows the trouble to continue.

Removing what silences them and stands in their way can tap an enormous

potential of energy for change…' What one does not know, can indeed hurt them.

Even the slightest bit of applied knowledge can ignite a fire to ripple change in

our society. (Michelle, final paper)

Especially because of the sureness and new knowledge Michelle demonstrates in her final

paper, this feels like a challenge to herself to take what she has learned and put it into

action. As further evidence, she has left a postscript for me at the end of her final paper.

She writes:

Rachel, I have thoroughly enjoyed your course and you as an instructor. Your

labor and efforts toward social justice have not gone in vain. It is now my duty to

continue your efforts for change! (Michelle, final paper postscript)

This suggests Michelle has developed *sticky* (Ahmed, 2004a) learning and the *desire*

(Fisher, 2001) and capacity for change.

As discussed in chapter two, feminist pedagogy argues that how we teach may be

as important as what we teach because how we teach models for students new ways of

learning and doing. In the focus group, students were asked to reflect on the impact of the

Feminist-Humanities approach to teaching and its impact on their learning. In Group

Three Erin, who identifies as a white woman, says:

Um, Rachel's teaching approach was very different than any of my other

professors I've ever had. Um, she really pushed us to open up and speak our

minds, which in many other classes you don't have the opportunity to do, or, in

our situation, what we talk about, I would never ever talk about it in another class.

Um, for example, she would ask us uncomfortable questions and let us know it was okay to express our feelings… (Erin, focus group)

Group Three returns to this topic in their responses to the question about change. Brianna, who identifies as a white woman, says:

So I was almost—I was close to saying, "I might not take this course." Because I just want to get through all this and get out. [Laughs]…And I know that's a terrible, like, way to think. But, um, I'm glad I stuck with it because…It helps me to, like, I guess open myself up a lot more. Like, I guess I realized I can open myself up more than what I…you know, than what I really usually do. (Brianna, focus group)

Molly, who identifies as a Korean American woman, agrees and adds:

I liked that she [Rachel, the instructor] was, like, so emotionally, like, invested…in what we were learning and in each [inaudible but perhaps "student"] because, like…I don't know. I feel like every other teacher I've had this semester, they don't even know my name…And then, like…I don't know. She, like, knew each of us, and I liked that part. (Molly, focus group)

Erin adds:

She definitely—I've never had a professor that cared individually about each student like she did. She, like, has a passion for what she does, and that really helps, like…like, if it was any other professor, honestly today I would not have come [to the focus group]. Like, it's not mandatory. But for her, like, that's why I'm here. Because she's such—she's put in so much time for us. Like…we need to put in time for her. She deserves it. (Erin, focus group)

Taylor, who identifies as a white woman, agrees and says:

> Yeah, like, I felt too, like…the papers we wrote. I've had other professors that either don't even turn back your papers, and you have no idea what they're thinking about you, right? Or anything like that. And she gave so much feedback on our papers. Like, I feel like that could help me become a better writer…you know what I mean? Just be a better student all around. (Taylor, focus group)

Speaker 3, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, compares their experience in our class with a friend who took a different section of the course. They say:

> My friend took this course, and she said it was the most boring thing ever because it was a lot of *PowerPoint* presentations. And people were afraid to say anything because they wanted to agree with the teacher, how she felt about it and stuff. I feel like Rachel didn't make us feel that way. We could say anything and she would…think it was valuable, no matter what you said because it was your experience and your opinion on it. (Speaker 3, focus group)

As Fricker (2007) says, "Anything that we have to learn to do we learn by the actual doing of it: people become builders by building and instrumentalists by playing instruments. Similarly we become just by performing just acts…" (p. 81). And feminist teaching models justice and gives students opportunities to practice justice in the classroom. By recognizing students individually, engaging with them emotionally, demonstrating care, and responding to students with openness, curiosity, and empathy for the challenges of the epistemic project, feminist teaching models a way to hold open and honest conversations about difficult topics while respecting others and how to stick with these conversations when they are uncomfortable. Additionally, specific and detailed

feedback on their work demonstrates to students that their instructor is invested in their learning, while also encouraging them to improve their writing and deepen their critical thinking about course concepts. As natural as this teaching approach may feel to many who teach from a feminist pedagogical stance, these quotations are important reminders that teaching differently models a way for students to think differently, treat others differently, and act differently as they move beyond the class.

Social Identity and Learner Performance: The Resisters

An important finding of my analysis is the complex ways social identity informs students' learning performance. Although this may seem obvious, a closer look at how this played out within this group of student-participants offers useful lessons about the interaction of social identity and social justice education. There are three students who largely resist the epistemic project of the Feminist-Humanities curricular model. They are Sarah, Omar, and Arun. None of the three demonstrate evidence of either shift one or shift two. Sarah's final paper discusses the course materials in a way that suggests she completed course readings and paid careful attention in class. Whereas, neither Omar's nor Arun's final papers reference any of the course materials nor make concrete claims about their learning. The first few times I read through their papers, I viewed them simply as weak papers; however, repeated readings helped me locate affective clues that suggest the social identities of these student-participants may have direct bearing on how they narrate their learning. And this became clearer as I connected these affective clues across student papers, including within the final papers of students outside this small group of resisters. Since each of these three student-participants holds different identities and approaches their final paper differently, I present my findings for them separately. I take

account of the intersection of their identities, considering their gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and social class both separately and together toward a richer understanding of how they each perform their learning, what these performances can tell us about their individual course experiences, and what looking at them collectively can tell us about the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model on student learning and about learning in a social justice course more generally.

Aisha and Sarah

I begin with a close look at Sarah's final learning analysis. To best highlight how her identities might offer clues about her learning performance, it is useful to compare and contrast her final paper with Aisha's. Both identify as heterosexual women. Aisha identifies as Asian—Pakistani and American—and Muslim, and Sarah identifies as white and says she was raised in a Christian home "and used to be much more religious than she is today." For both women, their final papers are filled with emotionally descriptive language that builds as they write. And for both women, their featured emotion is anger. Aisha is outraged by the insights she develops about how she is viewed and treated by others—specifically her immediate family and her close friends—based on her gender, racial, ethnic, and religious identities and their intersections. The quotations from Aisha presented earlier in this chapter support this interpretation. To summarize, her revelations center on two categories: first, how her American friends interact with her, and their reticence when introducing her to their families due to her Muslim and Pakistani identities in a Post-9/11 America; and second, how her parents' expectations of her are informed by the tension between her bicultural identity as simultaneously Pakistani and America and her gender identity. Her final paper draws a picture of her looking closely at

232

herself in a mirror and being surprised by what she sees. In her final paragraph she writes:

> I could say that my entire mindset about the way I look at social classes, gender and race changes after this class but I think what I am more concerned with is how much more information I learned about things I already knew. I already was aware of my gender, social class and race but I never knew things about how one was associated with the other and how that singled me out from most people. Throughout this course, we watched numerous videos, wrote a lot of essays and played different games just to find out that we are the people we talk about. Every single [one] of us, I believe, has the power to change at least one of [the] things we talked about. There is something inside every single [one] of us that can be used against the powers that we despise. The hardest part is putting our words into actions and then creating a phenomenal movement that just might change a [the?] world. Like Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." (Aisha, final paper)

Aisha has fully embraced the epistemic project. I think it is important that what most surprised her is what she "learned about what [she] already knew." This is evidence that the Feminist-Humanities model has been successful for encouraging Aisha to interrogate her knowledge. But I think there is something else going on in this sentence, especially in light of the sentence that follows it. Much of what has surprised her is very personal: she has learned more than expected about herself and about how she is viewed by her family and by her American friends. Aisha ends by challenging herself to create change. In this moment, she channels her anger by looking outward to consider what she can do

233

differently. Her path forward is unclear, but she is looking around in surprise at what she thought she knew and considering how to move forward differently with what she has learned. This suggests she has achieved *transformative recognition* and is now considering how she may contribute to the *somethings-to-be-done* (Gordon, 1997). Aisha combines the three *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001) from the beginning of her paper through the end. She uses affective analysis to challenge her assumptions, explore the intersections and collisions of identity, and learn about power structures. She, more than any other student-participant in this investigation, has integrated these tools in a comprehensive and sophisticated analysis with propulsive force (Radway, 1997). And her identification of the class-wide shift in attention created during *StarPower* exemplifies this integration. For her, in that moment, the *anger* and *hostility* that surfaced while playing the game "opened a door" that she intends to leave wide open.

Sarah's final paper also reflects a building anger, but with a different focus and intention that lands in a different place; however, like Aisha, Sarah is angry at the way she is perceived in the world. Her paper, like Aisha's, begins modestly with a look back at what she wrote in her first paper. She is a good student, smart and attentive, and she confidently walks through the course materials and describes what she has learned. She has paid close attention to course materials and class discussions. Her focus on emotions begins on the second page, when she discusses *Animal Farm*, which she describes as a "brilliant" set up for "taking on the difficult themes that lay ahead" in the course, specifically around "discrimination and inequality." She continues:

> Reading "Animal Farm" can be very emotional, and it is good that I experienced
> many emotions because it reminded me that getting emotional about something

means that you care. It was imperative that I tune into all my emotions in this

class, that way I can use those emotions to ask myself *why* I am feeling that way.

(Sarah, final paper, emphasis in original)

It is clear Sarah understands why the class read *Animal Farm* early in the semester, and

she has homed in on the usefulness of affective analysis. Although her final paper is

fueled by emotion, Sarah largely uses her anger to lash out and reassert the neoliberal

perspective of her first paper. She is proud of her accomplishments, as she states several

times in both her first and final papers. And her lack of structural or power analysis leads

her to judge others in light of her own accomplishments. This strategy may be protecting

her from the challenges to her worldview created through the curricular model. For

example, she writes:

> Another issue we discussed is that women are not paid as much as men in most
>
> cases. But there are MANY successful women that defy these statistics, and go
>
> above and beyond in their career. [In her first paper she describes her mother as
>
> one of these women.] I believe that we live in a day and age that if you are
>
> ambitious enough, and give it your absolute all, you can achieve just about
>
> anything. But, if you blame your problems on stereotyping, or anything BUT your
>
> lack of perseverance, you will fail. (Sarah, final paper, emphasis in original)

She goes farther:

> For example, my 'mother in law to be' was discussing that since she got a
>
> teaching degree that she is unable to get any other job that is not teaching. I
>
> explained to her that she has misunderstood, because there are numerous
>
> professionals that work in a different career than what they went to college for.

However, you don't just start at the top. You have to choose what you want to do,

and then learn from those who are at the top and generate experience in that field.

I'm a strong believer of Benjamin Franklin's quote 'you can do anything you set

your mind to. '(Sarah, final paper)

This is an example of classic neoliberal ventriloquation. And Sarah uses capitalization to

assert her points. Neoliberal framing highlights Sarah's pride in her accomplishments

while underscoring that, unlike her, those who are unsuccessful have not set their mind to

succeed.

Sarah then takes issue with a statement I made in class about how with a

reasonable degree of accuracy one could predict an individual's life outcomes at their

birth based on their social identities and their social locations. I said this to demonstrate

the sorting power of social structures while making the point that while individual

experience may vary, wide variation is not as common as we might assume. As

examples, I referenced our playing of *StarPower*, watching *Inequality for All,* and our

course reading by Pincus (2011), who states that most social class moves are both

incremental and intergenerational. Rather than considering what structural analysis can

tell us, Sarah spends an extended paragraph discussing a fictional person named "Tom"

who could have a variety of experiences that could alter his life's trajectory. On the

individual level, she is right. However, Sarah has missed the larger point about the impact

of structure and relations of power on life outcomes. Her frustration is evident when she

says, "So to say that you can predict the outcome of someone's life at their birth, based

upon what you've learned from stereotypes, is offensive." Her defensiveness suggests

this class discussion may have hit a nerve, perhaps because it infers that Sarah holds a

degree of privilege from her social identities, privileges she is unwilling to acknowledge or interrogate.

As she moves into her discussion of race, her resistance and outrage grow stronger, giving further evidence to support this interpretation. She writes:

My race had never been a huge part of my life until recently in the past 2 or so years. I can honestly say that I never experienced prejudice until I moved to [nearby urban area]. Something I did that resonated with the video we watched with the woman who did a study with white students on racisms [sic] [Jane Elliott in *The Angry Eye*] was when she stated '(white students) see themselves as others see them for the first time' and 'they learn how the system operates, and this is how it operates.' It is interesting, because this is exactly how moving to [nearby urban area] has made me feel. This is also why in some areas, white privilege does not exists [sic]. And to believe that statement, you need to live in those areas to experience it yourself. This also goes for anyone who believes racism only works one way- from white to black. This seems to be a popular opinion today, but I have the experiences to prove it oh so wrong. (Sarah, final paper)

Sarah's words push against course learning and reassert the rightness of her pre-course knowledge. In fact, this quotation suggests she views herself as oppressed because of her skin color and what it means where she now lives. Her resistance grows stronger still a few sentences later when she writes:

Disliking the person that threatened to hurt me while walking into my house doesn't make me racist. Disliking the people that call me names doesn't make me racist. Not feeling safe in a neighborhood where there are stabbings, shootings,

and high crimes doesn't make me racist. It makes me human. I wish that race

would stop being tied to everything…I really wish that I could express how it all

makes me feel, but I can't without be [sic] labeled racist. Anyone who has

negative feelings fueled by bad experiences toward a person of color is

automatically labeled racist in today's society. (Sarah, final paper)

Her repetition of "doesn't make me racist" is telling. Her claims are absent an historical

understanding of how the current conditions in her city came to be, how they have been

maintained overtime, and how they have differential impacts based on the markings of

racial identity, like skin color. While she argues that her skin color makes her a target of

racism a few sentences earlier, she later ventriloquates a false universalism that erases

racial identities and ignores structural causes for why an area may experience higher rates

of crime and violence. Her language actively resists the connection between the

individual and the social that could help her recognize the frustrations and challenges of

those who navigate social conditions different from her own. Importantly, by resisting an

empathetic connection with those she sees as other, she remains self-satisfied without the

need to interrogate the conditions that have allowed her to succeed.

This echoes an example she gives in her pre-course knowledge paper for how she

knows that racism still exists today, even after "there hasn't been racial segregation for

over 50 years," presumably referring to the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of

Education of Topeka* in 1954. In this first paper she wrote:

There are times in my life that I have been treated differently because of my race.

For example, I remember one evening this past fall I gave a compliment to a

young African American woman in a restroom because I liked her shirt.

Unfortunately, I did not receive a thank you, but she rolled her eyes and said 'whatever white girl.' I was very shocked and kept quiet while I tried to wrap my head around why my race had anything to do with the compliment towards her but I did not let her remark bother me. However, I was disappointed with the fact that amounts of racism still exist today. (Sarah, first paper)

In this example, racism is directed at her. Sarah does not consider how her remark might have been interpreted by its recipient. This perspective continues throughout her final paper as well, as Sarah resists learning. From this evidence it is clear the course experience has affected Sarah; in the language of Ahmed (2004b), it has *pressed* upon her. In reaction, she uses her words as weapons of self-protection.

In Aisha's final sentences, she looks outward to consider what she can do to create change. By contrast, in her final sentences, Sarah writes:

This class most definitely taught me that perception is everything. I know that I still have the right to my own opinion, and that never felt violated. But, I've learned that before I defend my opinion (because I tend to get very defensive) I need to open my eyes and ears and listen and take in *both* sides of the argument. I am a very passionate person, and I want to make positive change wherever I go. I realize that first, I need to understand "the other side" of the arguments I disagree with, why I disagree, and how I can learn to find a steady and healthy medium between the two. To make change, compromises need to be made on both sides, and everyone has to come to an agreement. As I previously stated, yes sometimes my life is affected by who I am. But no matter what I endure- good or bad, I am

proud of who I am. If I had the choice to change my gender, race, or social class I

wouldn't change anything.[100] (Sarah, final paper, emphasis in original)

There is a great deal of work occurring within these closing sentences. Sarah uses words

like "rights" and "defend," again echoing her need for self-protection. At the Diversity

Challenge annual conference at Boston College in October 2012, invited keynote speaker

Lisa Patel Stevens argued that white privilege can be understood as a property right.

Viewed from this perspective, Sarah's words can be interpreted as a defense of her right

to credibility, in Fricker's (2007) language. She listens to improve her arguments rather

than to ask if there is information she has missed; she does not consider that she could be

wrong. Sarah uses her words to protect her against perceived threats to her rights and the

discomfort of the epistemic project. By refusing to examine the ways her social identities

influence who she is and how she moves through the world, Sarah emerges with her pre-

course worldview intact.

Omar, Arun, and Mark

Thus far in this chapter, all quotations have come from the women student-

participants. The evidence above suggests the model's focus on emotions resonated with

a majority of the women, in some cases allowing them to use affect as a significant

learning tool. Although Mark, Arun, and Junke were each present at the focus group,[101]

none of them speak on the tapes. And comments made on tape suggest Mark left the

focus group soon after it began. However, there are affective clues within the men's final

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[100] Her final sentence echoes comments made by Paige, a white participant in *What's Race Got To Do With It?*. Paige makes these statements when she is in the "hot seat" being asked by the students of color in the room if she would be willing to change her race. Paige first becomes defensive, then says if she is being honest, she would not choose to change her race.

[101] Brock and Omar do not appear to have attended the focus group.

papers to suggest they may have also been affected by the course. However, while Sarah

uses outrage to resist challenges to her pre-course knowledge, the men resist differently.

I did not initially recognize the rhetorical resistances of the men. It was not until I

compared word choices across the male student-participants that I was able to identify the

connections among them. This process began when I noticed language Arun uses in both

his first and final paper, which led me to reconsider his learning performance. In both

papers he wrote, "I think my identity is very straight forward and to the point." This is a

deceptively simple sentence, and it took time for me to recognize the work it is doing. My

insight came after I identified similar yet different statements made by Brock, Omar, and

Mark. Brock[102] describes himself as "friendly" and easy to get along with, Mark twice

describes himself as "lazy," and Omar discovers how easy it is for him to "adapt," to "fit

in" to U.S. culture. Omar, who identifies as a heterosexual man from Saudi Arabia, and

Arun, who identifies as heterosexual Indian American man, each use language to

diminish their minority identities and highlight the ways they are like everyone else;

whereas Mark—who identifies as a white heterosexual American man—uses language to

diminish his responsibility to move forward differently with his new course knowledge.

Like Mark, Brock identifies as a white American man, but he also identifies as gay.[103]

And both Mark and Brock state that their families have struggled economically; whereas

both Omar and Arun appear to have been raised with some level of affluence. There is a

great deal happening in the rhetorical moves in the final papers of these men. To wrestle

with their *complex personhood* (Gordon, 1997), I tease out the connections and the

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[102] I mention Brock because of the significance of his self-description as "friendly" and easy to get along with. However, he does not have further relevance within this discussion.

[103] None of these student-participants (Omar, Arun, Junke, or Brock) describe themselves as cisgendered men; however, it might be inferred from their self-descriptions.

differences in the ways the men perform their learning with special attention to their social identities. Omar and Arun are the learning resisters; therefore, I spend some time discussing how they each resist within their final papers. Even though Mark demonstrated substantial learning, as discussed in chapter four, it is useful to contrast Omar's and Arun's learning performances with Mark's. Doing so illuminates their similarities and differences in significant ways. Additionally, a closer look at Mark's performance during the *StarPower* game in conjunction with his final paper may offer important considerations about social identity and social justice education.

Omar

Omar was born and raised in Saudi Arabia and recently moved to the U.S. to attend university. He is married to a woman and slightly older than the traditional college student. Omar begins his first paper by writing:

> Everything here in America is different from back home in Saudi Arabia. From the culture and the way of life to the behavior. The perceptions [about gender, race, and class] here are different because of the democracy that is vividly present here. However, living in the USA feels like at home and I love studying in this institution as segregation and discrimination is highly banned here by the school policies. (Omar, first paper)

Through his language, Omar reflects the way Americans talk about their country and their democracy. He is enthusiastic about the opportunity to study in the U.S. He does not make it clear, but the way he writes later in his paper about what he will do after he returns to his home country suggests he is only here to study and does not plan to make America his permanent home. This too impacts what he sees and how he interprets what

he sees. He then says that in America discrimination is not allowed, "Thus, I appreciate all people and interact with the[m] equally despite their gender. It's one of my strengths. I have adapted to the new culture and I totally like it and feel comfortable." I think this is a significant statement and a clue to the learning performance Omar enacts through his final paper. His adaptability is one of his strengths. It is important to consider the image he may be trying to project—to others, but perhaps also to himself—given his identity as a Middle Eastern man in a post-9/11 America. He speaks to this in his first paper:

> When I first joined [the university] as a freshman, I was worried of the treatment I would receive considering I was of the Arab origin. My expectations were, however, proved wrong since I received warm treatment, contrary to what I was expected [sic]. I felt at home when interacting with the students of the different race. Most of them acted like they were unaware of their skin color, and thus treated everyone equally. (Omar, first paper)

He writes that he has learned to appreciate the "richness" of other cultures and how he will take this lesson with him when he returns home. From the university, he has learned that he is a "people-person individual" who can "fit into his new society and manage to live a normal life." Thus, he establishes himself as someone who is "normal" and fits seamlessly into American culture. He says before coming to the university he did not realize he had the "ability to adapt comfortably with the new surrounding." He goes further to demonstrate something he has learned in America. He says his experiences at the university have allowed him to deal with the prejudice he had about people from African countries. He now realizes the "richness of their culture" and has "realized that I

243

never had any negative feelings against them…it was just a notion I had from back home."

While Omar attended most class sessions, appeared attentive during class, and turned in his assignments on time, his final paper makes no reference to course materials, learning activities, or class discussions. Thus, his final paper is more clearly a performance rather than a learning analysis. At first, I interpreted this to mean he had learned little from the course. There is no evidence he has achieved shift one or shift two. However, as I used Catherine Kohler Riessman's (2008) dialogic/performance narrative analysis to interrogate the ways Omar performs his learning, paying close attention to his word choices and their sequencing, and as I connected his word choices to those of the other men discussed in this section, I began to recognize how Omar strategically diminishes his differences in ways that may allow him to feel safe and "at home" in America.

Arun

Arun is a traditionally-aged college student and a single heterosexual man. He was born and raised in the U.S.; however, his parents are from India and came to the U.S. as married adults before Arun and his sister were born. Although Arun makes a limited number of references to course materials, as with Omar, his final paper leaves the impression the course has had little impact on him. His focus is entirely individual; he ignores the structural and power analyses taught through the Feminist-Humanities model, and there is no clear evidence he has achieved shift one or shift two. Like Omar, Arun makes broad statements that lack nuance or reflexive depth. Additionally, while the instructions for the final paper asked students to use their first paper as a starting point to

244

describe what they have learned since the first day of class, Arun has cut and pasted lengthy passages from his first paper into his final paper without additional analysis. However, like Omar, his resistance is not explicit, and I only began to recognize it when I compared his word choices with those of the other men.

In his first paper, Arun makes several contradictory statements. For example, he writes, "…when it comes to social classes the first couple of things I think of is money and appearance." He expresses great pride in the "dream house" his father's hard work was able to purchase for the family. But he follows this statement saying, "I wish there was no such thing as a social class and everyone was equal." Regarding gender, he writes:

> Though [sic] I was raised with the thought of gender equality, I was also raised with the mindset to always be a gentleman and support, love and protect women. As a young boy I was always protective of my younger sister especially because she was a girl. (Arun, first paper)

He does not interrogate the contradictions in these sentences. Interestingly, he follows them by writing:

> I was not always as independent as I am today. My younger sister was the complete opposite of me while growing up. She was the type of daughter that never needed my parent's [sic] assistance for anything. Whether it was homework or friendships my sister never relied on anyone to help her get through her challenges. I on the other hand always felt like I could never overcome my obstacles alone. I always depended on my teachers to help me understand and get through my classes. If I had any problems and felt overwhelmed I always

245

expected my parents to help me get through and out of them. Once I approached

high school I realized that I could not always get through life so easily with the

help of others. Looking at how my sister was four years younger yet still more

independent than me also was a wakeup call for me to act my age and be

independent. (Arun, first paper)

Arun does not describe a sister who requires his protection. He continues:

My sister would want to play with my cars and always wanted to build Lego's

and I found it very strange. I would never touch a Barbie, because I know that is a

feminism thing to do and I am male. (Arun, first paper)

Not only is the use of the word "feminism" of note here, although likely a typo, but just

three sentences later, he writes about how "when we watched 'Role Reversal' in class I

really got to see how people judged one another for a female doing a male thing." And at

the end of the same paragraph, he describes how he "walked into class on the first day

and I saw a majority of females and assumed every girl in the class took education for

their major. As the year went on I noticed males that wanted to be teachers and the visitor

[male] from Aruba analyzing the class was an education major too."[104] Arun's discussion

of both social class and gender are filled with unexamined contradictions. His regular use

of female and male, rather than women and men, may suggest a rhetorical distance rather

than a consideration of the lives of real people and how they experience and negotiate

their gender identities, or it may suggest discomfort with discussions of gender.

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[104] Arun is referring to a group of four elementary education majors from Aruba who were visitors to the
university during the semester. There were three women and one man, and they joined our class for three
sessions.

Regarding race Arun describes his frustrations with the stereotypes about Indians, such as "getting good grades, being nice and being respectful…I personally think in my eye that this is a setback in a way even though it is a positive assumption." This is an acute insight, and Arun offers an example of a time he believes race was a factor when he and a friend both applied for the same tutoring job. Arun got the job, even without having any tutoring experience; he does not mention his friend's qualifications. Then he writes, "There has always been a race issue and always will." This statement allows Arun to abdicate his responsibility for change because the problem of racism cannot be resolved. However, he does demonstrate other sparks of insight made available through his racial identity. For example, he writes:

When I look at the world from myself as an Indian I really try to picture other people's lives and how different it is just because of the color of your skin. Another prime example is what happened in Baltimore recently with the riots. Blacks are being blamed for being 'thugs' but does that mean every black person in the world is a thug? No, it just goes back to assumptions. Being Indian has really shaped me to realize no matter what anyone says about you, that you should be proud of what you are and where you come from. (Arun, final paper)

He recognizes at least on an individual level that being stereotyped by race and ethnicity, even positively, has negative implications and constricts how we are viewed and perhaps even who we become. Then, near the end of his paper, Arun makes a surprising statement. He says, "Everyone always sees the negative sides to racism but always seems to forget all the positives." He follows this saying, "Barack Obama is the first African American president." It is likely in the first sentence he meant to say *race* rather than

racism. His paper is littered with typos and lazy sentence construction. But this sentence is difficult to ignore as it practically jumps off the page. I interpret his meaning to be that we have made racial progress and come to recognize the contributions of African Americans, thus, not every aspect of race is negative.

Arun's only mention of power is when he writes, "I also agree that females are very hardworking and successful but the male [sic] have an edge and power in the end." However, absent an examination of the structures that create and maintain gendered power relations, Arun's paper lacks reflexive depth or an expansive view of American society. He does not provide evidence that he is wrestling deeply with course concepts. He closes his final paper by reverting to a neoliberal approach to change. He writes, "I plan on making a difference by just being a good person and making the ethically right choices in my mind." Arun closes his final paper as he began his first: by reinforcing his identity as "straightforward and to the point." Arun resists a critically reflective mode of learning, thereby protecting himself from the challenges of an epistemic project that might complicate his pre-course knowledge. And perhaps his is a useful resistance that allows him to succeed as an individual without considering what his identity as Indian American might mean about his access to social power.

Mark

As I have done with Aisha and Sarah, I find it useful to contrast Omar's and Arun's learning performances with that of one of the other men to better illuminate the influence of social identities, and I believe Mark's final paper is the most useful for comparison and contrast. Mark identifies as an American-born, white, heterosexual man. As discussed in the previous chapter, his final paper demonstrates evidence of shift one

248

and, at least to some degree, shift two. However, after a close examination of the word choices of the men, and the rhetorical work their words appear to be doing, Mark's repeated description of himself as *lazy* appears significant. And his identity as a white man may hold a clue to the usefulness of describing himself as lazy, especially in light of his demonstrated course learning. Additionally, discussing Mark's overall course experience not only further illuminates the learning performances of Omar and Arun, it is also useful for looking again at the contrast between Aisha and Sarah I have drawn above and how gender together with race, ethnicity, and national origin informs learning performance.

Mark writes, "Also, during this course I have seen that I have been given almost the most privilege a person can have in our society." Through his course learning, Mark now recognizes he lacks privilege only in his economic status. As he discusses in his final paper, he actively seeks economic mobility through his college experience, both through his studies and through the connections he makes with his fraternity brothers, who he describes as largely more economically advantaged than him. He twice describes himself as *lazy*: once in the beginning of the paper, and once again toward the end, mirroring the pattern Arun has used about his identity being "straightforward and to the point." Mark's final paper is three pages short of the minimum for this assignment, not allowing the space for deep reflexive writing, and offering evidence of his laziness. Following his dramatic performance during *StarPower*, Mark largely faded from view, continuing to attend class sessions and turn in assignments on time but rarely participating in class discussions. Interestingly, he does not mention *StarPower* in his final paper, even though

several students mention his performance in the game during the focus group conversations, as described earlier in this chapter.

The class-wide shift from playing *StarPower* that Aisha identifies in her final paper appears to have been a significant learning moment for student-participants, based on the evidence presented in this chapter and chapter four. However, this learning may have manifested differently for individual students. Earlier I discussed Hallie's observation that toward the end of the game the students not in the Squares (who were at this time busy outside in the hallway making new game rules) responded to their lack of power in one of two ways: anger or apathy. The Triangles had some interest in fighting against what they perceived as unjust, but the Circles decided they no longer wanted to play a game they felt they could not win against those they perceived as power-hungry. Mark, frustrated at having been demoted from the Squares after the second round of the game, was trying to organize a joint insurrection of the Circles and Triangles against the Squares. I believe it is useful to examine more closely Mark's learning performance, especially in light of his claim of laziness.

After the third class session, Mark stayed after class to talk with me about how much he was enjoying the course but also how he was unsure what to say when I asked students to describe how they felt following that day's class discussion of *Animal Farm*. About my conversation with Mark, I wrote in my teacher/researcher journal:

He [Mark] said he didn't feel anything really and wasn't sure what to write. I told him that was fine and to simply write that he's either unsure of how he's feeling or isn't aware of experiencing any specific emotions. I also said that, as the semester continues, and as we discuss more hot-button issues such as gender,

race, class, sexuality, and more, his emotions would likely be easier for him to describe. At this point, I simply want students to get in the habit of paying attention to what they're feeling and capture it in writing. He said he understood and appreciated my explanation. He also said he did have a lot of things he'd wanted to say in class today, and that in future classes he would participate more. (Instructor, teacher/researcher journal, February 11, 2015)

In the next class session, playing *StarPower* appears to have been a significant experience for Mark, although this is not evident in his final paper, in which he does not mention the game. What I captured in my journal does not document Mark's specific participation in the class discussion following the game, other than that he was still full of energy and frustration about how the game had ended. I also did not document it in detail, but I wrote that during this discussion Mark's attempts to get the Circles and the Triangles to work together was discussed by his classmates, Elisabeth in particular. It surfaces again in the focus group discussion, when Speaker 11, who from context clues likely identifies as a white woman, goes into an extended commentary about Mark's participation in *StarPower*. They say,

> …When we were playing *StarPower*, Mark was a Square at first, and then he dropped to a Triangle for a little while there. And I was in the Triangles. And then our group was sitting there, and he was saying how we should boost him back up to the Squares because he was like, "If I'm not a Square, then I don't want to play." And we were like, "Then don't play." And then he was like, "Well, then, maybe I should just quit." And then we all voted and kicked him out, and we exiled him. And then Rachel [the instructor] walked in, and she was just like,

"Why is Mark in the corner?" And I'm like, "Oh, he's done playing. We exiled

him. He's done." And she was like, "Oh my goodness!" But it was weird because

if he wasn't at the top, he didn't want to play. If he wasn't the top dog, he was just

done. He was just mad, and I felt the exact—well, not the exact opposite. I didn't

want to be a Square, and I didn't want to be a Circle. I was very content being a

Triangle, because when you're a Triangle, you get some amount of response from

the Squares, but you don't have complete resentment from the Circles. So you're

kind of the best of both worlds. When you're right in the middle, and no one can

really hate you, per se, because—yeah. So I was just totally happy being a

Triangle the entire game.[105] (Speaker 11, focus group)

So, as thoughtfully observed by one of his classmates, Mark is willing to fight to regain

the power he once had. Perhaps at least within the game, like Sarah, Mark sees his

privilege as a property right, and he wants to fight to regain what he feels was unjustly

taken from him. Like Stephanie in *The Angry Eye*, Mark points out the injustice and

pushes against it, viewing himself as revolutionary in his attempts at insurrection. As

suggested by Stevens (2012), a common response of the privileged to losing what they

consider to be rightfully theirs is to fight to get it back. As Speaker 11 is quoted saying,

Mark wanted others to "boost him back up" to where he felt he belonged. It is impossible

to be sure without Mark's commentary on the incident, but it is conceivable based on

how it played out that Mark's identities as a white man played into his expectation that he

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[105] Although they do not reference this, Speaker 11's comments in many ways mirror material from both Pincus (2011) and *Inequality for All*, each of which mentions the importance of a strong middle class for keeping a stable economic system. Both say that a strong middle class allows the poor and working classes to invest in the meritocratic belief that if they work hard enough that they can move into the middle class, while also allowing the middle class to feel that true wealth is just outside their grasp and, thus, achievable.

would remain a Square, in charge of the second half of the game. And when his classmates, who were mostly women, did not do as he had asked by returning him to Square status, he decided to exit the game entirely. As Speaker 11 suggests, if he could not win, the game was not worth his effort: "He's done." (Speaker 11, focus group)

After his discussion with me at the end of the third class session and his dramatic performance during *StarPower* the following week, Mark mostly disappeared from view, rarely speaking up in class, and with no further conversations with me after class. His work continued to demonstrate thoughtfulness and attention to readings, and his final paper provides evidence of notable learning and a growing recognition of the connection between social systems and individual behavior. But one thing that is clear from his final paper is his investment in social mobility. He feels less-than because of his family's socioeconomic status, which he describes as lower than that of his fraternity brothers. I am speculating, but it is possible someone deeply invested in social mobility could experience a crisis if, after playing *StarPower*, it became clear that, as we discussed a few class sessions later, in America social mobility is limited and most gains are incremental and intergenerational (Pincus, 2011). And further, he was unable to get his classmates to "boost him back up" (Speaker 11, focus group) to where he felt he belonged. These twin slights could have influenced Mark's learning performance, as well as reduced his investment in the course.

In my journal I documented that roughly 80% of the class ended *StarPower* in the same group where they were at the end of the first round. The first round demonstrates the luck of the draw, the random assignment of socioeconomic status at birth, as point value is determined by the chips each person draws from the bag (without looking inside)

253

at the start of the game. Few students improved on their initial status. The Squares announced they would promote three students from the Circles or Triangles into the Squares, and, interestingly, Mark was one of them. However, by this point, the game had imploded, and Mark had either been exiled or chosen exile. Since he does not discuss the game in his final paper, I can only speculate about the impact playing *StarPower* had on Mark. However, since his visibility and participation in class diminished immediately after we played the game, this suggests it may have been a significant moment for him. It is difficult to say if his is a productive resistance because the material is getting through to him or if it is a disengagement with a learning opportunity he does not value. However, Mark's final paper demonstrates notable learning and an expanded understanding of the connection between social hierarchies and individual behavior. This led me to consider that his self-description as lazy might hold greater meaning.

Seen in this light, it is possible to interpret Sarah's anger, Arun's straightforwardness, Omar's adaptability, and Mark's laziness as differing forms of self-protection from the challenges of the epistemic project of the Feminist-Humanities model, where each student resists in ways that are gendered and raced and work to diminish their responsibility for change. Sarah's anger is both gendered and raced. Omar and Arun want to be seen as normal, fitting in, and adapting, as their gender and race together make it important that they integrate seamlessly into American culture. And as a white man, Mark's laziness might allow him to demonstrate notable course learning while still shirking the responsibility to use his new knowledge to do things differently.

Emotional Rigor

While intellectual rigor is essential to learning, the evidence in this chapter suggests that emotional rigor combined with intellectual rigor can produce *stickier* (Ahmed, 2004a), more resonant learning. And the affective knowledge that results may act as a connector between the individual and the social, linking our social structures and their individual body level effects in ways that demand change. Seen in this light, affective knowledge is the bridge I have been seeking between awareness and action. It connects the two previous *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001), bringing them together to build students' capacity for change. Shift one illuminates the more expansive context of individual experience. Then shift two makes visible the social gears and power relations that organize individual lives into categories of identity and inform individual experience, and this recognition guides students to better understand why perspectives and experiences differ. However, it is shift three that allows students to feel the outcomes of the social structures and power relations that press on individuals. The opportunity to experience and then interrogate the effects of injustice creates the reflective pause (Fricker, 2007), the analytic space, to wrestle with the realities of oppression, as well as the way privilege blinds the privileged to the suffering of others. Done rigorously, the resulting knowledge demands change. As Gordon (1997) says, students come to feel the *somethings-to-be* done that demand their action.

The Feminist-Humanities is a complex curricular model that continuously toggles between the individual and the social and the intellectual and the emotional. The intellectual without the emotional is abstract. However, feelings require intellectual rigor for analysis and meaning-making. Through a variety of course materials, this repeated,

255

reinforcing reflexive process asks students to interrogate what connects and divides individuals, how society moves, and what individuals and collectives can do to move it differently. Individual/structural and intellectual/emotional are not dichotomies but essential components of a comprehensive teaching and learning model designed to build students capacity for change. In retrospect, it is not surprising that affective knowledge is the connector. After all, as Gordon (10997) makes clear, *ghostly matter* is made visible through affective analysis. Ghostly matter is also found in the interstices: the intersections of the dichotomies; thus, it is a natural connector: a bridge from who we are to who we could become.

The evidence in this chapter also demonstrates that social identities influence how student-participants respond to affective knowledge, and its influence may be detectable through the word choices of their learning narratives. As this group of students demonstrates through their experiences playing of *StarPower*, proximity to power may manifest in how students negotiate their new knowledge and the challenges of the epistemic project. Hallie says in the focus group that members of the Circles responded with apathy, feeling that the game was "stupid," while members of the Triangles responded with anger, willing to fight for power just outside their grasp. And, as Allison makes clear, the "power-hungry" Squares were no longer paying attention to the suffering of their fellow classmates. Using Riessman's (2008) dialogic/performance narrative analysis to look closely at how the game played out offered useful clues about the ways affective knowledge may have informed how student-participants described their learning, giving further weight to the pedagogical potency of affective awareness in the classroom. This suggests affect's potential can be leveraged to inform stronger and

more effective approaches to social justice education by teaching into the discomfort

(hooks, 1994) that arises and using it to identify the barriers and challenges to social

change and consider more effective ways of responding to them.

CHAPTER SIX: Steps Forward and Back: The Interstices of Change

This "generational moment"[106]

During the Summer of 2020, a wave of protests rolled across the country in the wake of George Floyd's murder by Derek Chauvin, an officer of the Minneapolis police department. Although Floyd's murder was a repeat of an all-too common event in America, it was also unique because it was captured on a widely shared video. And the heinousness of Chauvin's treatment of Floyd—the base dehumanization—surprised and horrified many who watched. Following the video's release, what has been commonly termed a racial reckoning began to gain momentum across the country among individuals, groups, organizations, and corporations. Protests erupted in many U.S. cities; corporations and other organizations made public statements about racial justice and hired diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) officers; and small groups of white allies created antiracist book clubs to educate themselves. Two years later, much of this energy has dissipated. Corporations and organizations have been criticized for a lack of follow-through or real action on their public statements, and antiracist book clubs have gone into hiatus as white allies struggle with coalition-building and grapple with how to move from study to action (Cineas, 2021). Americans are asking how best to develop the skills and tools they need for transformative social change. This dissertation contributes to this ongoing dialogue, in particular around the ways higher education can develop educational pathways to build students' capacity for social action. My findings suggest some of the essential components of these pathway are the ability to talk across difference, a deeper

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[106] Kimberlé Crenshaw, as quoted in Ottesen (2022).

recognition of the ways social identities and affects impact our attempts to change, and a better understanding of how change is created.

Closing the aerial distance: Feminist narrative analysis

My research practice for this dissertation can be described as "a cultural practice that organizes particular rituals of storytelling told by situated investigators" (Gordon, 1997, p. 10). As a situated investigator—teacher/researcher —I have organized the reflexive learning narratives—written and spoken—of the twenty-four student-participants in a one-semester diversity course to elucidate significant moments in their course learning. My findings inform our knowledge of the student learning experience in a social justice course, the challenges students face as they struggle to expand and correct their social knowledge, and the complex ways their social identities and affects interact with the epistemic project of the Feminist-Humanities model. My main research question was: *Has the Feminist-Humanities model built students' capacity for change by providing them with the tools they need to move forward differently?* My analysis suggests many of the student-participants have built the *desire* (Fisher, 2001) and capacity for change in ways that support the effectiveness of the model's roots in feminist pedagogy and the humanities ways of knowing. In addition, the particular methodology of this investigation—feminist narrative analysis—was a useful tool to elucidate learners' course experiences. I also identified patterns of learner resistance that offer useful lessons for social justice curricula.

To reach my findings, I needed the same analytic tools taught through the Feminist-Humanities model: I shifted my attention from instructor to researcher to view students' learning narratives from a more expansive and more richly contextualized

259

perspective, and I developed a language of analysis that allowed me to look more closely at what I thought I knew about student learning in a social justice course so I could identify what I had missed. As with students, it was within my layered and iterative reflexive practice where I developed the focused attention to analyze what their learning narratives could reveal. This required me to recognize the *complex personhood* (Gordon, 1997) of individual student-participants and then identify patterns across students as well as their divergences. Particularly revelatory were the ways feminist narrative analysis— and especially Catherine Kohler Riessman's (2008) dialogic/performance form of narrative analysis—allowed me to locate markers of knowledge, power, and affect within student writing to interrogate what was happening within, beneath, behind, and through the language students chose to describe their learning.[107] Combining the investigative tools of feminist and literary theory provided a foundation to not only ask questions about what students learned but also—perhaps more importantly—*how* they learned. Examining word choices and narrative structure gave me a ground-level view that closed the *aerial distance*[108] and brought me into students' struggles to know. And I believe the how of their learning offers the most useful lessons for social justice educators at this precarious time.

While some of my findings are specific to this group of student-participants, they nonetheless offer potentially useful insights for developing more effective ways to teach this challenging material in general education courses where students arrive with a variety of social identities and differing investments in learning the material and creating

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[107] See also Ahmed (2004a).
[108] Martin (2000). See also my discussion of Martin's use of the concept of "closing the aerial distance," which she borrows from George Eliot, at the end of chapter one.

change. One of my epiphanies from this investigation is that if evil is achieved through ordinary, incremental, and routine daily actions (Arendt, 1963), perhaps so too is positive change. If so, the hairline fractures identified in chapters four and five may be more significant than they first appear. As the ground shifts beneath students, it opens up new possibilities for moving forward differently. This suggests the real work of change happens in the interstices where students grapple within the discomforting moments that unsettle their previous knowledge. And with state and local lawmakers across the country considering and often passing legislation that bans uncomfortable topics in the classroom, this is an important moment to gain and articulate deeper knowledge of the productive capacity of discomfort.

In chapters four and five, I discussed students' steps forward and then back, as the neoliberal discourses of our *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007) exert their strong pull. Neoliberalism is a familiar place of rest and comfort when the challenges of interrogating knowledge become too much for students. In retrospect, this makes sense. It also makes the interstices—the places between the shifts—a rich place from which to ask useful questions about which pedagogical interventions disrupt the neoliberal pull. Perhaps in a one-semester general education course, the hairline fractures created through these disruptions can build pathways for continued change. And the three *shifts in attention* (Fisher, 2001) I have identified indicate these disruptions hold pedagogical potency.

My findings: Three shifts in attention

Shift one: Critically reflective learning mode

In shift one, students look around at a once-familiar landscape to find there is more happening around them than they previously recognized. This can be unmooring,

and students' initial moves to reckon with new information are often tentative. As I discuss in the chapter four, as students' awareness is heightened by course materials and classroom activities, they look anew at their social interactions, relationships, assumptions, and language choices. They try out the tools of analysis presented through the Feminist-Humanities model to explore why people hold differing perspectives and experience the world differently. Shift one surprises students, and this energy propels them into the epistemic project. These are the moments when students shift into an active mode of critically reflective learning (Fricker, 2007), which is reinforced through the course-long practice of reflexive writing. The pedagogical interventions useful for catalyzing shift one are the course metaphors and other epistemic framing devices and activities that disrupt students' course expectations, prepare them to interrogate their social knowledge, and set them up to think differently about what is to come. The stereotyping (or automatic social processes) activity used on the first day of class and the camera lens metaphor were both useful for catalyzing shift one, preparing students to ask useful questions about how their socialization has shaped their knowledge, and how this knowledge informs their assumptions and social interactions. There is also strong evidence that teaching students to analyze language (Ahmed, 2004a & 2007; Greene, 2009; Postman, 1996) raises their conscious awareness of how words do work and carry affect (Ahmed, 2004a) and the complex ways our language choices can either reinforce stereotypes and support hegemonic systems or create new ways of thinking. For example, as discussed in chapter four, several students demonstrated the potency of language analysis through their recognition of the racial coding in everyday language.

262

Thus, students achieved shift one by challenging their automatic social processes and examining how they are informed by the images and words of our *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007). They expanded their worldview to add *texture*, *density*, and *nuance*, as they reckoned with the realization that life is far more complicated than they had assumed (Gordon, 1997). As described in chapter four, my analysis demonstrates that most student-participants demonstrate evidence of shift one (21 out of 24). Importantly, it is within shift one that students practice the *reflective pause* that Miranda Fricker (2007) says is an essential corrective for *identity prejudice*. This alone is a robust tool for change, making this initial shift pedagogically significant.

Shift one occurs largely at the individual level, where students interrogate their knowledge mainly about who they are and how they have been shaped by what they have been taught to notice and value. However, this shift is also foundational for all other shifts because it requires students to consider that their assumptions could be wrong. Therefore, despite the small moves forward and the steps back, the disruption of shift one can lead to significant and resonant learning, especially for students whose social identities place them in positions of privilege because shift one encourages them to *wonder* (Ahmed, 2004b) about the possibility of different futures.

Shift two: Connecting the individual and the social to illuminate relations of power

To move students beyond an individual, personal growth perspective on their learning, it is necessary to reveal how our institutional structures *press* (Ahmed, 2004b) on individuals. Through shift two students interrogate "the relationship among power, knowledge, and experience" (Gordon, 1997, p. 23). This is the pivotal move that transforms a diversity course into a social justice course. Illuminating relations of power

within our institutional structures further encourages students to break with the neoliberal discourses of our *social imagination* (Fricker, 2007). Revealing the mechanisms of power—the *things-behind-the-things* (Gordon, 1997)—makes the case for change and demands that students take their new knowledge into the world to act differently.

Interrogating power is a foundational element of feminist theory and feminist pedagogy (Crabtree, et al., 2009) and central to the Feminist-Humanities model. In developing the model I learned that if you are not talking about power, you are not talking about justice. Crucially, feminist pedagogy also contests power relations in the classroom, as instructors model the change process in concrete ways that directly impact students' lives and learning: through the curriculum, course materials, assessment tools, and the student-teacher relationship. As demonstrated in chapter five, in the focus group several students identified these elements of feminist pedagogy as vital to their course learning. Feminist pedagogy not only deconstructs relations of power, it also models justice through classroom practice.

In chapter four, I present evidence that seventeen out of twenty-one student-participants achieved shift two, although to varying degrees; and ten student-participants also grappled with the operations of power within our social structures. However, as I illustrated, this is the shift through which students describe learning that *resonates*, that they will *remember*, suggesting a *stickiness* (Ahmed, 2004a) that may continue to reverberate after the course has ended. Effective pedagogical interventions that engendered shift two include several of the course readings[109] that revealed the ways

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[109] In particular Blake (2014); Cheney-Rice (2015); Dowsett (2014); Lorber (1994); Mmari, Blum, & Marshall (2015); Orwell; (1996/1946); Pincus (2011); Smith (2015); & Swarns (2014).

systems of oppression impact individuals differently based on their social identities. However, the most compelling class activity for illuminating the very real impacts of power structures on individuals was playing *StarPower*.[110] As I describe in chapters four and five, it makes sense that experiencing the headiness of power or the despair of its lack would resonate with students in deeper and more personal ways. This is the strength of experiential learning and the affect it creates. And because the Feminist-Humanities model uses affective analysis to interrogate students' game experiences, it further fortified this *sticky* learning (Ahmed, 2004a).

One of the strengths of the Feminist-Humanities model is the way it builds a language of analysis for students before it interrogates specific systems of oppression. Only after introducing the analytic tools of knowledge, identity, intersectionality, structure, power, language, and affect does the model examine the systems of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class. And crucially, these systems are explored by placing the life experiences of those they marginalize at the center of the curriculum, whenever possible in their own words. By the time counterstories are introduced to challenge received knowledge, students have developed analytic tools that reveal information they have missed about the lives of those positioned differently. Storytelling brings students into these often unfamiliar lives, gets them involved, and encourages them to listen to understand as individuals describe the ways they navigate the social structures that press on them. Applying their developing analytic skills to examine counterstories builds students' capacity to talk across difference. These skills are further reinforced as students

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[110] See chapter four for an in-depth discussion of the game *StarPower* and students' descriptions of what they learned from playing it.

wrestle with this new learning through ongoing, process-oriented reflexive writing that brings together intellectual and emotional rigor.

Shift three: Feeling for change

As I discuss in chapter five, the data collection semester was the first time I explicitly asked students to focus on their emotions and observe emotions in others. I introduced this strategy early in the semester (during the third class session). And from then on, I gave students a few minutes at the end of each class session to write about what they had learned that day, and how they were feeling about what they had learned. Ten out of twenty-four student-participants demonstrate evidence of shift three. They are all women, and half of them identify as women of color. It was in the focus group conversations that I more fully recognized the impact of this strategy on student learning. In these conversations, students applied affective analysis in ways that moved beyond awareness of injustice to demonstrate their growing capacity to think and act differently. Again, it is important to note that only women speak on the focus group tapes, and the focus on emotions is not taken up by the men in an identifiable way in their final papers. However, what I found most remarkable during the focus group is the way students demonstrated a growing capacity to talk across difference, stay with difficult conversations, and apply their learning to their lives. Especially illuminating were students' discussions about the death of Freddie Gray, *StarPower*, and the viral video of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) song.[111] Within each of these interactions, students put their new analytic language into practice to interrogate and make sense of social phenomena. Not only did these conversations illuminate learning not captured in

[111] See chapter five for a detailed discussion of each of these focus group conversations.

students' final papers, they also demonstrate that the focus group was a learning event through which student-participants articulated, extended, and built knowledge together. This makes a strong case for including these interactive opportunities for students to discuss their learning, in both small and large groups, throughout the semester and again at the end to create and reinforce learning that sticks (Ahmed, 2004a).

Social identities inform learning

Perhaps my most important finding is the ways students' social identities interacted with their learning. If the intersection of our identities informs our knowledge, behaviors, and values, it makes sense that it would also inform our learning experiences in a course that interrogates these social constructs. As postpositivist realist theory tells us, "identities are both constructed and real" (Moya, 2010/2001, p. 472); therefore, we must consider this "double structure of thought that links the epistemological and the social" (Gordon, 1997, p.11) in relation to student learning, as well. Students' reflexive writing assignments were key to my discovery of the interaction of identities and learning. And feminist narrative analysis, in particular the dialogic/performance approach (Riessman, 2008), gave me the tools to examine this rich data source in ways both nuanced and layered. Importantly, the course-long focus on affect worked its way into student learning narratives in profound and unexpected ways. The affective language students used in their final papers, focus group conversations, and in particular their discussion within the focus group about the usefulness of paying attention to affect, led me to this insight. Without these data sources and this analytic tool, I might have missed this link.

The ghosts at the intersection of "power, knowledge, and experience" (Gordon, 1997, p. 23) led some students to *transformative recognition*, and pushed others to actively resist information that contested their pre-course knowledge. My findings suggest the pathway chosen depended on how close students felt in relation to positions of power. For example, when we played *StarPower*, Elisabeth followed the rules hoping the Squares would look on her favorably and let her rejoin their ranks; and they did. Her compliance was effective. Mark was willing to fight to get back into the Squares, but his attempts to rouse his fellow Triangles and some members of the Circles to build a coalition to grab power from the Squares resulted only in his exile. As his fellow Triangle (Speaker 11, focus group) described it, they were content to be in the middle group and not interested in staging a revolution. [112] And students in the Circle group were apathetic once they realized they could not win the game.

It makes sense that the impact of the Feminist-Humanities model would depend on the student's relationship to power. When individuals and oppressive social structures collide, *hauntings* are created, and affects are their manifestations (Gordon, 1997). As Avery Gordon says, "Haunting is a part of our social world, and understanding it is essential to grasping the nature of our society and for changing it" (p. 27). As demonstrated by a few of the student-participants—Aisha, Michelle, and Molly, in particular—students' social identities may prime them to embrace the need for change. For others—such as Sarah, Arun, and Omar—it primes them to resist it. And each of these alternatives requires careful curricular attention.

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[112] See chapter five for greater detail about this comment within an extended focus group conversation about *StarPower*.

268

The women of color

The women of color as a group demonstrate the most significant course learning. As I discuss in chapters four and five, they moved quickly through shift one and shift two to embrace shift three. Their enthusiasm for the epistemic project recalls the Combahee River Collective's statement that Black women have a view from the bottom. They say in their Black Feminist Statement (2010/1977):

> We might use our position at the bottom, however, to make a clear leap into revolutionary action. If black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression. (p. 110)

Not all of the women in this group identify as Black or African American. However, it is clear that for most—Aisha, Michelle, and Molly, and to a lesser degree Mona and Nia—the analytic tools of the Feminist-Humanities model, and perhaps affective analysis in particular, hold explanatory power that primes them for "revolutionary action." For these student-participants, *transformative recognition* has created the "propulsive force of the imagination" (Radway, 1997, p. viii). This was a surprise of my analysis,[113] and I suggest that the focus on affect was key to their "propulsive" interaction with the curricular model. Affective analysis engaged their imaginations for how our social connections and structures might be reimagined and rebuilt, and how these changes could improve their lives and the lives of others who share their identities. The women of color have an investment in doing things differently. However, it is not only the women of color who

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[113] As I describe in chapter four, I developed the Feminist-Humanities model while teaching a largely white-identified student population.

take up affective analysis to connect the cognitive and the affective: the head and the heart. The evidence in chapter five suggests several of the white-identified women do so as well, in particular Elisabeth, Hallie, Allison, Brianna, and Leah. While none of the men demonstrate affective analysis, there are clues within their final papers that suggest they may have been moved by the interventions of the Feminist-Humanities model, and the focus on affect in particular; however, their shifts were more difficult to detect because they manifested in very different ways to those of the women.

The resisters

The evidence of the women of color and white women who demonstrate *transformative recognition* (Gordon, 1997) through shift three contrasts with the rhetorical resistance I located in a small group of three students: Sarah, Omar, and Arun. The language choices that marked their resistance gave me the grounds to interrogate the complex interaction of social identities and student learning performance. It is understandable that the now-visible *conjurings* (Gordon, 1997) would create epistemic fissures, as the ground shifts and shifts again beneath students' pre-course social knowledge, and that some would actively resist the challenges. But perhaps their resistance is a different form of grappling with new knowledge. Their resistance may also come out of the messy interstices of learning, although it looks different for them. The stand-alone course puts a full stop at the end. It suggests finality, and students likely feel the need to end the course in a tidy way. And, for some students, the neoliberal discourses of hard work and meritocracy, adapting to circumstances, and personal responsibility provide a useful way to diminish their cognitive dissonance. Whether students take up the epistemic challenge to consider different ways of thinking and doing,

position their learning as personal growth, or actively resist new knowledge may each indicate small, interstitial shifts in attention (Fisher, 2001) that could, over time, build students' *emotional cognitive capacity* (Fricker, 2007).

Berenice Malka Fisher (2001) says in her discussion of the characteristics of shifts in attention that they are sometimes "abrupt," lightning bolts of recognition, like those of Aisha, Michelle, and Molly. However, the shifts can also be "gradual," slowly building over time, which may better characterize the shifts of Elisabeth, Hallie, Allison, Brianna, and Leah. And as I mention above, perhaps the character of change is informed by students' closeness to power positions. This recalls bell hooks (1994)—who inspired my explicit use of affect in the classroom—when she talks about how consciousness-raising initially makes things worse. It unsettles what was thought settled, asking us to look more closely at what we have taken for granted or ignored. This discomfort is more welcome if it holds the power to liberate us from oppression. Rhetorical moves of self-protection are comforting for those who fear they may lose power if they heed the *somethings-to-be-done* (Gordon, 1997). Evidence presented in chapter five suggests this is the case for Arun and Omar, both of whom are invested in fitting in among white American men, and Sarah, who is invested in a neoliberal understanding of her achievements, which she feels she has earned through her efforts. For this reason, the rhetorical resisters, along with the students who achieve a shift only to later give in to the strong pull of neoliberal language, may offer the most useful portrait of the messy complexity of change. And perhaps through a greater understanding of their course experiences we can build stronger curricular models.

Productive discomfort

At this moment in history, when white allies struggle with what to do in response to intractable racism, and male allies struggle with what to do in response to intractable sexism, and allies of all identities work to support the needs of trans family members, friends, students, and employees, perhaps we need a richer understanding of the change process: both what it looks like, and what it feels like. The field of education long ago identified the productive discomfort created through the learning process in a concept called the *learning edge*,[114] a concept I introduced to students early in the semester to prepare them for the challenges to come.[115] Change, like learning, unsettles, and this can feel uncomfortable. However, this is an essential element of knowledge-building. In the conservative backlash now being waged against America's racial reckoning, discomfort is a main target. Interestingly, the debate is not so much about discomfort as it is about *who* is uncomfortable. For example, within schools, students of color have long felt ignored, silenced, and uncomfortable (or worse) during discussions about race (Belsha, 2022). However, at this moment 39 state legislatures have introduced or passed laws banning "uncomfortable" conversations in the classroom around "divisive topics" in what the lawmakers describe as an effort to protect students (Belsha, 2022; Hornaday, 2022; Steinberg, 2022).

For example, the Iowa House of Representatives passed a law in June 2021 that, according to its main backer, Representative Steven Holt (R), "would ensure that schools

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[114] See Forster, Zimmermann, & Mader (2019). The *learning edge* is an important concept in the field of education within a comprehensive model of the learning process. In particular, this article discusses the significance of emotions within this process. See chapter five for my discussion of this concept.
[115] It was also important to introduce the concept of the learning edge to students because almost half of the student-participants were pre-service teacher candidates.

did not unfairly portray entire groups of people as inherently racist or sexist, and that

concepts such as White privilege would be taught as part of more in-depth lessons"

(Belsha, 2022). However, in a telling remark, Rep. Holt said further, "This does not in

any way ban diversity training or racial sensitivity training" (Belsha, 2022). Thus, topics

of diversity and inclusion are permissible; however, the topic of equity is not.[116] The

Iowa Department of Education had planned an equity conference for April 2021;

however, it was postponed after this new law was initially proposed in March 2021, with

no future date set at this time. This has left the many students of color who had planned

presentations for the conference feeling "doubly dismissed" (Belsha, 2022).

Debates about discussing equity in schools are similar to and connected to debates

about critical race theory in schools, another concept that has been banned by some state

legislations and considered by more. Kimberlé Crenshaw, one of the creators of critical

race theory, sheds light on this backlash in a recent interview (Ottesen, 2022). Crenshaw

makes it clear that backlash has always been a durable barrier in the history of racial

progress in the U.S.[117] As she says, "Modest reform creates tremendous backlash. And

sometimes the backlash is more enduring than the reform" (Ottesen, 2022). For instance,

she cites the three to four decade long backlash to just over a decade of civil rights

reform. She continues saying the current backlash was spurred specifically by the swell

of protests, statements, and actions in response to the murder of George Floyd, in

particular because white people were frequently those demanding action. Crenshaw says:

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[116] For another recent example of the backlash against "equity," see also Schneider (2022) for a discussion
of Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin's recent "purging" of the word from the state's education system.
[117] See also Huntington & Glickman (2021).

Think about it: The George Floyd situation was a generational moment. Right? It was huge. Every state in the union had a march. The majority of people out there were not of color. Language was being shared widely for the first time: "systemic racism," "institutionalized patterns of marginality," "racial power." People were saying these words in a way that they hadn't — ever! Yet, and this is where some of the problem is, it's like those songs where everybody knows the chorus and they sing the chorus at the top of their lungs. And then [the rest of the song is]: *Mmmuuhmm da da da da mmmmmmmmerm* — that's kind of the situation we had. With no real literacy beyond that, with no capacity to actually say: Okay, so tell us what that means, what needs to be done. Tell us what the policies are that allow us to unravel the institutionalized forms of inequality that you are now talking about. And if you don't have the ability to do it, you've picked a fight with a giant, and you don't have ammunition. (as quoted in Ottesen, 2022)

Crenshaw identifies the issue: to move forward differently, we need the tools to develop more accurate knowledge of what is happening and to understand how change gets made. This recalls my research problem for this investigation. If a greater mass of white people more fully recognizes the racial oppression built into our social structures, what is their next step? As Crenshaw says, we first need to look "deeply into our institutions and into our culture to understand why these things are happening" (Ottesen, 2022). Or, in the language of this investigation, we need the tools to build our capacity for change so we are able to move forward differently. This is the intent of critical race theory and other frameworks that allow us to interrogate the outcomes of our practices, policies, and

laws.[118] Thus, connecting the individual and the social is essential to any social justice

project. Interrogating the intersections and collisions as individuals navigate oppressive

structures builds human connection (Noddings, 2007) and demands action (Gordon,

1997). Crenshaw (Ottesen, 2002) also talks about the importance of language analysis to

reveal the power held by its gatekeepers. As she says, "The power to define what your

words mean…[is]…The power to define it in order to destroy it" (Ottesen, 2022).

Therefore, although Crenshaw does not use these terms specifically, she is highlighting

several of the components of the Feminist-Humanities model as necessary tools to create

transformative change: connecting the individual and the social, illuminating relations of

power, and language analysis. The model can contribute to the ongoing dialogue about

how to take the reins of this "generational moment" (Crenshaw as quoted in Ottesen,

2022) to make use of productive discomfort. Importantly, the student evidence in chapter

five suggests the Feminist-Humanities model has more to offer than simply helping us

learn to sit with discomfort. Rather, this investigation demonstrates that discomfort is an

essential tool for building the critical analytic capacity to chart a path forward.

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Recommendations and conclusion

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My findings suggest the foundational work to build students' capacity for social

change occurs in the interstices, between shifts. For the resisters, much of their work is

self-protective, to keep the epistemic challenges at bay. There is a great deal occurring

within the narratives of the rhetorical resisters that suggest they may be on the precipice

of significant learning. This is a limitation of a one-semester, general education social

justice course. For this reason, an expanded curriculum is needed, perhaps a series of

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[118] See also Noddings (2007) and my discussion of this work in chapters two and four.

courses and set of student experiences that provide a structure for continual reflexivity within a variety of ongoing epistemic challenges. If the course investigated through this dissertation did not stand-alone but were the first in a series, gains could be amplified and resistances shaken. Perhaps the three resisters could be nudged over time. This work *takes time*, and it is accomplished through learning together (Ahmed, 2004b). The focus group demonstrates the power of engaging in reflexive learning in the company of other learners. The conversation about Freddie Gray's murder was particularly poignant for demonstrating what can be achieved if students have the tools to talk across difference, use counterstories to ask what they have missed, and analyze social phenomena within an ongoing and collective reflexive process.

One of the greatest lessons of this dissertation comes from Mark, who may be emblematic of the interstices of change. My early conversations with him, his class participation, and his intellectual curiosity led me to expect great things from him. But after playing *StarPower* he faded into the classroom background. He continued to attend class and submit thoughtful assignments on time. However, his excitement and curiosity disappeared from view. It was only after I gave attention to the work of the term *lazy* in his final paper that I began to recognize his significance for this investigation. Describing himself as lazy relieved him of the responsibility to use his new knowledge to enact change. And it was clear in his final paper that he had achieved notable learning. Social psychologist Devon Price (2021) describes laziness as either a mechanism of self-protection or an indication that someone does not know how to move forward. Mark's description of himself as lazy may be the result of both. And the self-protection aspect is a good reminder of Fisher's (2001) caution that it is important to sometimes release the

tension that develops in the feminist classroom, where interrogations of oppression are central to the curriculum. She recommends shifting between discomfort and opportunities to reflect on the discomfort. She says, "These shifts stimulate rather than deaden desire, by suggesting that political discourse can both speak to the hurts that stem from injustice and provide concrete visions of possible change" (p. 34). Reflexive writing is the primary way the Feminist-Humanities model creates opportunities for students to reflect on discomfort. And it is clear from the evidence in chapter five that this pedagogical strategy had a positive learning impact on many of the student-participants. However, to more effectively reach out to students like Mark, social justice curricula also needs more effective ways to teach students how to do things differently, in specific and concrete ways that demonstrate active change that feels doable to undergraduates. It is also important to help students recognize that justice is not a zero-sum game: the goal is liberation for all.[119],[120] Students need opportunities to explore how even small actions sustained over time create change, especially when combined in collective efforts. As Allan Johnson (2001) describes, our world is always changing, but we create the direction through our daily actions. Or as I tell students: everything we do matters all the time. And explicitly teaching students that discomfort is expected in the change process, that tensions are common in coalition-building, and that tension can be used productively builds a new schema in their heads for what they can expect and a set of tools to navigate

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[119] See Coaston (2019). See writes of her interview with Kimberlé Crenshaw about the purpose of her legal concept of *intersectionality*: "In short, Crenshaw doesn't want to replicate existing power dynamics and cultural structures just to give people of color power over white people, for example. She wants to get rid of those existing power dynamics altogether—changing the very structures that undergird our politics, law, and culture in order to level the playing field."
[120] See also Combahee River Collective (2010/1977).

the challenges that arise. This allows students to see a path forward and imagine themselves walking on it.

The insights of this investigation led to a deeper understanding of the impacts of the Feminist-Humanities model on student learning. The confluence of feminist pedagogy and the humanities ways of knowing are a trustworthy means of engaging students in the epistemic project of social change. Based on my findings, I recommend centering the change process within the curriculum. Discussions about what justice looks like are useful early in the semester to provide students with as much time and space to *imagine otherwise* (Gordon, 1997) as they spend developing authentic knowledge of social inequity. This can be achieved with an additional overlay of course materials that present discrete, concrete, active strategies for change throughout the semester, perhaps through personal narratives or literature about change agents and their experiences in the struggle. Students need a new schema for thinking and acting differently, which holds the potential to lower the defenses of the resisters (Price, 2021). Group action projects on issues of justice are another way to lean into *for-ness* (Ahmed, 2004b) through applied, relevant learning about real-world problems that create opportunities for students to practice "becom[ing] just by performing just acts" (Fricker, 2007, p. 81). Further research on the complex ways social identities interact with student learning in social justice education and the affective impacts of our pedagogical inventions could offer more effective ways to bring students of all identities into the work of justice. And further attention to the interactions and collisions of identities, affect, and learning continues the centrality of valuing personal experience and respecting *complex personhood* (Gordon, 1997) at the core of feminist teaching.

My findings also suggest social justice educators might usefully lean into the pedagogical potency of affective knowledge. The evidence in chapter five suggests affective analysis is the bridge between awareness and action. This is the bridge I sought through this investigation, and perhaps also the bridge to help us navigate this historic moment. bell hooks' recent death reminds me of her important lessons about affect in the social justice classroom (1994): affective analysis is important to the curriculum because it shows students that difficult conversations *are* the productive way forward. Emotions exist at the interstices of change, where the work happens. Understanding this holds great potential to reinvigorate our energy and build our capacity for change.

Appendix A: Student Demographics, Spring 2015

Spring 2015 [Deleted] University Undergraduate Students			
	Gender		
Race/Ethnicity	**Males**	**Females**	**Total**
Black or African American	1,061	1,936	**2,997**
American Indian or Alaskan Native	9	19	**28**
Asian	393	490	**883**
Hispanic	430	673	**1,103**
White	4,606	6,674	**11,280**
Foreign	216	161	**377**
Unknown	289	358	**647**
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	6	14	**20**
Two or More Races	269	467	**736**
Total	**7,279**	**10,792**	**18,071**

Appendix B: Consent to Participate in Research

Identification of Investigators: If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact us:

Rachel Carter
Principal Investigator
Instructor: [course number deleted], Spring 2015
Adjunct Faculty: [University deleted]
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Professor & Chair: Gender & Women's Studies
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I. Purpose of the Study: As a conscientious instructor, I regularly reflect deeply on my teaching strategies, course discussions, the content of student writing, and the feedback students provide at the end of the semester in my efforts to continuously improve my teaching and the impact of this course. However, through this research project, I will formalize this reflection process as I use a research methodology to analyze student writing, keep a detailed teacher/researcher journal to better understand classroom activities, and hold a focus group at the end of the semester to gather detailed feedback on my students' course experiences.

Important note: I will not analyze any of the data gathered during the Spring 2015 semester until after the semester ends and I have submitted final student grades.

As you consider your participation in this research project, please note that I intend to publish the results of this research in a dissertation toward the completion of my doctoral degree. In addition, I intend to publish the results of this research in a journal as a contribution to the growing field of social justice education.

II. Procedures: Once the semester ends and I have submitted final student grades, I will begin to analyze student writing to identify changes in perspective that may occur over the course of the semester. For consenting participants*, I will include the following 3 course assignments in my study: 1) Who Am I? paper, Part I; 2) Who Am I? paper, Part II; and 3) Final Learning Analysis.

Participating students will hand in two copies of each of these 3 assignments. On one copy I will provide detailed feedback and your assignment grade; I will return this copy to you. I will hold the second copy in a locked location until the course has ended. After the semester ends and I have posted final student grades, I will begin to analyze the 3 written assignments of participating students, looking for points of learning and changes in perspective.

Please note: Students may opt in or opt out of this study at any point before the final day of classes of the Spring 2015 semester. Students who opt out will have the second copy of their papers returned to them. Students who opt in will then provide me with a second copy of their participating assignments.

At the final class meeting, my colleague will hold a focus group to ask student participants to reflect on their course experiences. My colleague will elicit your responses to questions about the course material, reflections on how the course was taught, your major points of learning, ways the course could be improved, and what you feel you are taking forward from the course experience.

*Please note: Students who do not consent to participate in this study will still complete these assignments toward fulfillment of their course requirements.

III. Disclosure of Information: Any personal information learned from student writing, classroom activities, and focus group participation will be kept confidential. Please see Section IX below for details on how your

confidentiality will be assured. However, please note that by signing this form, you allow the principal investigator to make your written assignments available upon request to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its regulatory agencies, as required by law. Your identity will be removed from all documents made available to them. Additionally, please note that focus group conversations about the course held at the final class meeting will be audio recorded; please see further details in Section IX below.

IV. <u>Voluntary Participation</u>: Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before indicating your interest to participate in this research project.

V. <u>Rights of Research Subjects</u>: If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this research project, you may contact the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's Office for Research Protections and Compliance at 410-455-2737. Or you may also report your concerns anonymously by email to <u>compliance@umbc.edu</u>; you may visit their website at <u>http://research.umbc.edu/office-of-research-protections-and-compliance/</u>. You may also contact Dr. Carole McCann, the advisor for this research project (see contact information above).

VI. <u>Potential Risks and Discomforts</u>: I do not expect any risks or inconveniences to you as a result of your participation in this research project. As stated above, I will not begin to analyze the data gathered until our course is complete and I have submitted final student grades. Please note that this includes the audio tape of the end-of-the semester focus group, which will be given to me only after I have submitted final student grades. Again, you may opt into or out of this research project at any point before the final day of classes.

VII. <u>Potential Benefits to Subjects and/or To Society</u>: Beyond your course learning, it is unlikely that you will benefit directly from participation in this research project. However, the results of this study will provide me with valuable information about your learning and your perspective on this course. As a result of your participation in this study, I hope to improve both my teaching practice and course materials as well as gain a deeper understanding of my model for social justice education and its potential implications for this growing field of study.

VIII. <u>Compensation for Participation</u>: You will receive no payment or other compensation for your participation in this research project.

IX. <u>Confidentiality</u>: Since I am the course instructor, your written assignments will not be anonymous to me. However, I will keep them confidential. I will ensure your confidentiality in the following specific ways. First, in my dissertation and all subsequent publications, I will not identify the name of the university; rather, I will use the phrase "Mid-Atlantic public university." Additionally, I will assign pseudonyms to each participant and use these pseudonyms in all my notes and research records. The assigned list of pseudonyms will be stored separately from my research records and in a locked location. When referring to individual student participants in my writing, I will use only their pseudonym. Although I may need to note race, class, and gender differences in my analysis, as these characteristics may be important to understanding a student's course experience, I will do so in a broad and general way to protect the identity of individual students. For example, I will use the phrases "Caucasian student," "student of color," or "student of middle-class background," and the like. Finally and importantly, I will not begin to analyze the data gathered until our course is complete and I have submitted final student grades.

Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

Accepted by:

Investigator signature: _____   _____
                                      Rachel L. Carter   Date

Participant's signature: _____   _____
                                                                                                                 Date

Participant's telephone number:

_____

Participant's address:

_____

_____

Appendix C: List of Student-Participants and their Self-identities*

Aisha
Woman, heterosexual, Asian, Pakistani, middle-class, Muslim, traditionally-aged college student, exercise science and psychology major.

Allison
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, middle-class, Catholic, traditionally-aged college student, education major.

Arun
Man, heterosexual, American-born, Indian American, upper-middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, business administration major.

Brianna
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, early childhood education major.

Brock
Man, gay, American-born, white, lower-middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, elementary education major.

Catherine
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, mixed-race, middle- to upper-middle class, Catholic, traditionally-aged college student, social science/family and human services major.

Elaine
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, upper-middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, early childhood education and communication studies double major.

Elisabeth
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, middle- to upper-middle class, traditionally-aged college student, English and education major.

Emma
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, speech pathology major.

Erin
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, physical education major.

Hallie
Woman, heterosexual, white, middle- to upper-middle class, traditionally-aged college student, speech pathology major.

Junke
Man, sexuality not identified, Chinese, international student, living in the U.S. for 5 years, socioeconomic status not identified, traditionally-aged college student, information technology major.

Leah
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, middle-class, Catholic, traditionally-aged college student, early childhood education major.

Madison
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, social science major.

Mark
Man, heterosexual, American-born, white, (lower?) middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, business major.

Michelle
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, Black, middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, early childhood education major.

Molly
Woman, heterosexual, South Korean American, adopted by a white family, middle-class, very conservative Christian, traditionally-aged college student, elementary education and special education integrated major.

Mona
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, mixed race, lower-middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, psychology major.

Nia
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, Black, adopted, middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, early childhood education and psychology double major.

Omar
Man, heterosexual, Saudi Arabian, socioeconomic status not identified, international student, slightly older than the average college student, married, business administration major.

Rebecca
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, speech pathology major.

Sarah
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, early childhood education major.

Sophia
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, upper-middle-class, traditionally-aged college student, elementary education and special education integrated major.

Taylor
Woman, heterosexual, American-born, white, raised lower-middle-class but is now upper-middle-class, more than ten years older than the average college student, married, has a child, physical education major.

*All names are pseudonyms. All social identities are self-descriptions.

Appendix D: Syllabus for Spring 2015

[Course number and title deleted]
Telling our stories and listening to the stories of others: Developing understanding and building community as we imagine and enact a socially just world
Instructor: Rachel Carter

PART I: OVERVIEW

Course Description

To better understand our society and ourselves, we will investigate American social structures and the ways they organize our lives. This will allow us a greater context for understanding and interpreting how we develop our identities and our ideology. We will begin with the American public school as an example of these structures. Within this system, we will be able to see the complex relationship between privilege and oppression and how power operates within this relationship. We will close the semester by exploring individual and collective steps we can take to achieve socially just communities. Please note: This course requires an 8-hour field experience.

Expected Course Outcomes

At the end of this semester, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate your understanding of American social structures and how they organize the lives of Americans differentially by gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, social class, and ability, among other identity categories;
- Identify the messages you have learned about yourself and others through living within these social structures;
- Identify systemic barriers to creating well-functioning diverse and inclusive communities;
- And develop strategies to advocate for social justice in your daily life and in collective efforts to create structural change.

If you are requesting accommodation, please make an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible. Please bring to our meeting a memo from the [deleted] University Disability Support Services Office [contact information deleted] detailing your needs. I look forward to working with you. Thank you.

How I approach my teaching

Dialogue--multilogue--the noise of debate are absolutely essential correctives to the contradictory limitations of privilege and oppression. (Gorelick, 1996, p. 40)

Mine is a critical approach to multicultural education, grounded in the principles of feminist theory and the teaching practices of feminist pedagogy. Through this critical frame, we will better educate ourselves about American social structures, how they organize our lives and limit our understanding of the world, and how they impact us differentially based on our social locations. Our understanding of the world is partial (Hartsock, 2010); therefore, what we see is not the whole story. Each of us has personal

experience to share with the class as we build knowledge of what it means to be gendered, raced, and classed in American society. What you know is vital to our efforts. At the same time, our view is constricted by the narrow lens we use to see the world. Like a kaleidoscope, if you shift the lens, what you see changes dramatically (Nicholson, 2013). Therefore, we must also expand our limited view by listening carefully to those who experience the world differently from us. We have a lot to learn: about ourselves, about each other, and from each other. We must be open to this process. This is not easy; it requires that we "struggl[e] to develop new interpretations of familiar realities" (Collins, 2010, p. 347). We will juxtapose our knowledge of the world with what we learn from others. This will allow us to expand our view, correct our misunderstandings, and deepen our understanding of ourselves, our social processes, and those around us.

How I view the learning process
I teach from an ethical stance called *feminist pedagogy*, which has several defining characteristics. Through this frame, we will explore power relationships both inside and outside the classroom, use our personal experience as a springboard for understanding the operations of American society, listen carefully to those who experience the world differently from us, then use this new understanding to build better, more accurate knowledge of the world and explore steps we may take to create socially just communities.

All learning is social learning (Wenger, 1998), something we do best in a supportive community where we can publicly explore our complex and contradictory knowledge of the world as we struggle together for greater understanding. To create such an environment in our classroom, we will spend time early in the semester getting to know our fellow classmates, practicing the skills of careful listening, and using what we hear to interrogate our understanding of the world.

My goal is social justice. Thus, we will conclude the semester by imagining what a more just world would look like and discussing what we can do to move toward this vision. This is a journey we will take together this semester, and I am glad you will be joining me. I encourage you to remain open to this process.

How is this course relevant to our lives?
Through this course, we will develop critical listening, reading, and thinking skills that we can use in a variety of situations in our lives and careers. We will anchor our critique with an exploration of the moral implications of our thoughts, actions, and inactions (Noddings, 2007). We will come to see the ways injustice hurts us all, how it keeps us separated from each other, and how passive acceptance of injustice keeps us from imagining and creating a world that could benefit us all. We will work to break down these barriers and free ourselves to enact change in our communities. These skills will help us develop better-functioning diverse and inclusive spaces in our work and our personal lives, as we explore the implications our choices have in the lives of others.

Our Guiding Metaphors

To engage our imagination for how we will approach this course, I offer a metaphor of **storytelling** so we may begin to think about the ways we talk about who we are and how the stories we tell organize how we perceive the world. Storytelling is both *performative* and *dialogic*. It's performative in that our social processes are learned, much as an actor would learn a script. For example, we are socialized to the norms of our gender. This socialization organizes our thoughts, our perceptions, our behavior, in short, the ideology through which we encounter our world. Storytelling is also dialogic, in that our perceptions are fluid, in continual dialogue with our social learning, experiences, and personal interactions. The stories we tell are different in different situations and with a different audience. Throughout the semester, we will pause to consider how we perform our identities and how a difference in the telling opens up new ways of seeing ourselves, our relationships with others, and our responsibilities within these relationships.

PART II: COURSE STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Course structure

We will use questions and definitions to structure our course material (Postman, 1996).

Section I: American social structures
- What are the main socio-political structures in America?
- How do they organize our lives and determine our values and our actions?
- What is the purpose of the American public school?
- How does the structure of American education organize our lives and our society?

In this first section of the course, we will begin to look around us with fresh eyes to better understand American society and how its structure impacts our daily lives and our long-term opportunities. We will use the American public school as an easily-relatable example.

Section II: Our personal experiences
- What are the characteristics of American culture?
- What constitutes American identity and belonging?
- What are our cultural assumptions about those different from us? How do we know what we know about those unlike us?
- What are our educational experiences?
- How are our responses to each of these questions shaped by our identities and social locations?

In this section, we will examine the influences that have shaped our understanding of the world, based on our identity group memberships and social locations. We will introduce and define terms such as *power* and *hegemony* and explore their implications in our lives and social interactions. We will again use the American school as an example of how both power and hegemony operate in American society. We will also introduce the culminating assignment for this course, the *Who Am I?* Part II paper.

<u>Section III: Listening to and learning from others</u>

- What does *identity* mean? What does *difference* mean? How do they operate in our lives? How do our categories of belonging (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, social class, ability, among others) shape what we see and how we interpret it?
- In what ways does the broader context we develop from listening to others help us re-examine and re-interpret our understanding of the world?

In this section, we will listen to the voices of those often silenced by our social structures. We will examine the ways that categories of identity and belonging organize our lives and constrict our knowledge of the world. Each of these social constructions has its own logic, so we may pull them apart for the purpose of close analysis. However, we will come to understand that these categories never occur in isolation. We will close this section by defining and discussing the concept of *intersectionality* to help us see how identity categories interact with each other in an ever-shifting kaleidoscope of influence (Nicholson, 2013).

<u>Section IV: Imagining a more just world</u>

- What would a more just world look like?
- What steps can we take to disrupt hegemony and move closer to this new vision of the world?
- What are the steps necessary for collective action?

In this final section, we will consider what to do with our new understanding of ourselves and the world. We will use our expanding knowledge to revisit the barriers to social justice we identified earlier in the semester and explore ways they may be overcome. We will discuss individual steps we can take in our daily lives as well as the importance of collective social action for creating long-term structural change.

The importance of writing
Your thoughtful writing will be important to our work this semester. I believe that writing is the best way to bring into view our experiences and thoughts so we may build knowledge about how these elements have shaped our values and how they determine our behaviors. We will engage in a process called *autoethnography* to write in a purposeful way about our understanding of the world and our thoughts about our readings, discussions, and activities. *Autoethnography* is a process of reflexive investigation that goes beyond simple journaling to guide us to interrogate our cultural assumptions (Chang, 2008). Rather than simply reflecting on the course, you will become investigators in a process of self-discovery as you uncover the messages that have shaped your knowledge and identity (Brice Heath, 1983; Chang, 2008). This will require us to look at ourselves with fresh eyes. Writing our thoughtful responses will allow us to surface our understanding so we may examine it for accuracy and misunderstanding. I describe our writing assignments below.

<u>Grading Policy</u>:

```
93-100      A
90-92       A-
87-89       B+
83-86       B
80-82       B-
77-79       C+
73-76       C
70-72       C-
65-69       D+
60-64       D
Below 60    F
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Expectations for written work:
Please type, double-space, and proofread your work for standard grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, clarity, paragraph organization, coherence, and proper documentation. Writing style and mechanics represent 20% of your grade for each assignment. If you struggle with your writing, please consider making an appointment with the Writing Lab to have someone else provide feedback on your work before you hand it in. The Writing Lab is open to all students. Advance appointments are often necessary during busy times of the semester. Please contact them at [link to Writing Lab deleted] for more information about their location and lab hours and to make appointments.

PART III: ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Overview of Assignments

Attendance, Active Class Participation, and Professionalism	20 points
Who Am I? Part I: Initial exploration of identity (ungraded)	10 points
In-class reading responses (ungraded)	10 points
Conversation Paper	10 points
Literature Study	10 points
Service Learning Field Experience & Reflection log	10 points
Who Am I? Part II: Re-positioning our knowledge	20 points
Final Learning Analysis	10 points

Required Texts
1. Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*.
2. Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. (1982).
3. Various readings I will share with you throughout the semester, either via email or Blackboard.

Assignment details

Attendance:
The success of our class depends on your participation. Therefore, your attendance in each class meeting is a course requirement. Please be on time and come prepared to participate in class discussions. You will lose Participation points for each class you miss. If you miss more than two classes, I recommend that you drop the course and plan to take it in a semester when you are better able to make the needed time commitment.

Please provide me with advance notice via email if you will be absent or late. Absences and tardiness (even when communicated in advance) will reduce your Participation grade, as you must be present to participate in classroom activities.

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates specified on the course calendar. Absences from class do not change these dates. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to get missed assignments to and from me in a timely fashion (email of a Word document is one option; I also have a mailbox in the Deans' Office [location deleted]. Please make arrangements in advance to turn in assignments later than the due date. If the University is closed on a due date, the assignment will be due at the following class meeting.

Should you have a personal or family emergency,
please let me know this as soon as possible. Thank you!

1) **Class Participation and Professionalism – 20 possible points**
   - Active class participation means attending each class meeting and sharing in both the large and small group discussion.
   - Each student is expected to actively participate in each class meeting to receive full credit in this category.
   - *To show respect for the learning process, please do not send text messages during class, put your cell phones away and on vibrate, and only use your laptop for class-related activities. These are essential components of professionalism.*

What is included in the Attendance, Participation, and Professionalism grade?
Individual attendance and participation in classroom discussion and other activities.

If you are uncomfortable speaking and sharing in class,
please discuss this with me early in the semester.

Class Participation is defined as
   - Being on-time and present for the entire class experience
   - Completing each reading and assignment as scheduled
   - Communicating with the instructor
   - Contributing to class learning and community
   - Reading analytically and reflectively
   - Writing effectively
   - Connecting course ideas from week to week

- Demonstrating flexibility, resourcefulness, tolerance, and curiosity.

Please do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks. It is best to focus on ideas. The goal is not to agree; instead, we are here to listen and learn from each other as we explore the value of divergent perspectives. While participating in class, please keep in mind:

Professionalism means
- Showing respect for others in speech and nonverbal communication
- Being an active listener and respecting confidentiality
- Bringing these items to each class meeting: books and other readings, assignments, a notebook to take notes, and a writing utensil
- Using technology only for learning activities; refraining from sending texts during class time.
- Demonstrating integrity – At a minimum, plagiarism will result in a failing grade.

2) *Who Am I?* Part I: Initial exploration of gender, race, and social class – 10 possible points (ungraded)

Objective
To begin to surface your current understanding of how gender, race, and social class operate in American society and how they organize our daily lives.

Expectations
We will discuss the expectations for this paper in our first class meeting. This assignment will be due at our second class meeting, on **February 4th**. It is an ungraded assignment. This paper should be a minimum of 3 double-spaced, typewritten pages, with a 12-point font.

3) In-class reading responses – 10 possible points
- These written responses provide the opportunity to write well-developed but brief reflexive essays describing what you have learned from each of our required readings.
- You will complete these assignments at the beginning of class each day a reading is due (dates for these responses are noted on the course calendar). Reading responses will be handwritten, and I will look for a good faith effort in your structure, clarity, grammar, and spelling.

4) *Conversation* Paper – 10 possible points

Objective
To encourage serious, deep reflection on the ways people experience the world differently based on their identity and belonging.

Expectations

This paper should be a minimum of 3.5 double-spaced, typewritten pages, with a 12-point font.

<u>Grading</u>
10 total points:
8 possible points for depth of analysis/reflection
2 possible points for clarity, writing style, and mechanics

<u>Content</u>
- You will meet with someone from an identity group with which you are unfamiliar.
- You may choose to talk with someone who is: gay or lesbian if you are not, homeless, elderly (someone who is at minimum 50 years older than you), a non-native English speaker, significantly different ethnically, of a significantly different religious background, or who has a disability you do not share.
- Please do NOT talk with a friend or family member. Please choose someone you did not know on the first day of this class; it may be another member of our class.
- In your paper, you will respond to: 1) how this person's experience is similar to yours, 2) how this person's experience differs from yours, and 3) what you have learned from your conversation, both about your conversation partner and about yourself.

<u>Due</u>
The Conversation paper is due on **March 11th**.

5) Service Learning Field Experience – 10 possible points

<u>Objective</u>
To connect with members of an unfamiliar identity group through volunteer service.

<u>Expectations</u>
- Identify a service-learning site (e.g., community action organization, homeless shelter or soup kitchen, literacy clinic, nursing home or assisted living facility, hospital, organization that supports those struggling with addictions, etc.) that will provide you with face-to-face interaction with people who identify differently from you in some specific way. We will discuss this further in class.
- Make arrangements to volunteer for a minimum of 8 total hours.
- Please be aware that some organizations require training before they will allow you to volunteer; please keep this in mind as you plan for the completion of your hours.

<u>Your reflection log will include the following</u>:
1. a description of where you went and the activities you were involved in;
2. a description of what you observed;
3. a reflection on what you have in common with those you met;

294

4. an exploration of how their experience differs from yours;
5. an exploration of what you have learned from this experience, both about others and about yourself; and
6. linkages to our readings, classroom discussions, or other course activities.

Grading

Reflection Log (deep reflection, not just description)   5 points
Oral Presentation   5 points
                                              Total = 10 possible points

Due

- The reflection log is due for everyone on **April 22nd**.
- You will make a 5-10 minute presentation on your service learning experiences. No handout is required.
- Presentations will be held on **April 1st**, **April 8th**, **April 15th**, **April 22nd**, and **April 29th**. We will assign presentation dates in class, with your input.

6) Literature Study – 10 possible points

- You will visit the children's section of your local library or bookstore and read several books that represent our diverse society.
- You will choose three books and, using the assignment rubric distributed in class, you will conduct an analysis on the content of these books.
- You will then write a reflection essay to discuss what you learned from your analyses. In particular, I would like you to address the ways the stories we share with young children shape what they come to know about the world and how they see themselves.
- We will hold a class discussion on what we read and what we learned from this assignment.

Due

This assignment is due on **April 29th**.

7) *Who Am I*? Part II: A re-positioning of our understanding of gender, race, and social class and how these identity categories organize our lives – 20 points possible

Objective

To promote deep, personal reflection and to heighten our awareness of the ways American social structures organize our lives and limit our understanding of the world.

Expectations

- Please carefully review the handout distributed in class on **February 25th**. It will include a detailed outline for writing this assignment.
- You will examine how your perceptions of the world, your behavior, and your values have been shaped by your identity group memberships. Please provide specific examples.

- You will then identify the messages you have learned about yourself and others through living in our American socio-political structures (as discussed early in the semester). Please provide specific examples.
- This paper should be a minimum of 6 typed pages.

Due
Who Am I?, Part II is due on **May 13th**.

8) Final Learning Analysis – 10 points possible
- Based on your experiences in this course and the self-description you developed through your *Who Am I?* paper, Part II, you will write an essay to synthesize and demonstrate what you have learned through this course about yourself, our larger society, and your role in working toward socially just communities.
- The questions you will address and other expectations for this assignment will be distributed in class two weeks before the due date. This is a take-home exam.
- This paper will be a minimum of 4 typed pages.

Due
Your final learning analysis is due on **May 13th**.

Works Cited

Brice Heath, S. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

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Appendix E: Instructions for Who Am I? Part I: First Paper

How do the identity categories of gender, race, and social class organize our lives? How does the way we identify shape what we know about ourselves, others, and the world?

Although we often don't give it much thought, our identity group memberships help to organize our social lives. And how we identify shapes the knowledge we develop about ourselves, others, and the world around us. For this essay, you will describe who you are based on how you identify your gender, your race, and your social class. 1) Please begin by stating how you self-identify within each of these social categories. 2) Then discuss how your understanding of yourself, others, and the world has been shaped by your membership in these identity groups.

I realize that we do not often think about ourselves in these terms. Therefore, to help you get started, please consider these questions:

- What is my gender? What is my race? What is my social class?
- How did I learn to identify myself within these categories?
- Is my self-identity ever in conflict with how others identify me?
- In what specific ways has my gender, race, and class impacted my daily experiences? Please provide examples. If you believe an identity category has had no impact on your daily experience, please indicate how you know this. For instance, it may be helpful to think about how gender, race, and class have each shaped your educational experiences thus far. How might your educational experiences have been different if your gender, race, or class were different?

Expectations:
This essay should be a minimum of 3 pages, typewritten, double-spaced, with a 12 point font and 1 inch margins. Please make sure your essay has both an introductory and concluding paragraph. I recommend the following organization for your paper: A 5-paragraph essay: 1) Introduction, 2) Gender, 3) Race, 4) Class, 5) Conclusion.

This is an ungraded assignment; however, it is worth 10 points, which is a full letter grade. Therefore, please do your best work and give a good faith effort to your grammar, writing style, punctuation, syntax, etc. Thank you, and please let me know if you have questions!

Appendix F: Instructions for Who Am I? Part II: Final Paper

General guidelines for writing the *Who Am I*? Part II paper:

Please refer to the outline for this final paper that we distributed and discussed in class on **February 25th**. It will provide definitions of the concepts we've covered and important considerations for each section of the paper.

Please consider these 3 strategies as you begin to conceive and outline your final paper:

1) A useful starting point for writing this paper is to use any material you've added to the sections of this outline during our free-writes at the end of our class meetings.

2) Another useful writing strategy is to take your *Who Am I*? Part I paper and use our class readings, in-class discussions, videos, class activities (like playing *StarPower* or the stereotyping exercise from our first day of class), your in-class essays, other written assignments, and all of your class notes to question your assumptions about gender, race, and class in America, both those you expressed in your *Who Am I*? Part I paper, as well as any other assumptions you brought to our class.

3) Finally, please consider this statement from the final page of the outline distributed on February 25th: Our course may be described as a journey for each class member. Each of us has brought different backgrounds, experiences, opinions, and beliefs into the course. Please develop a well-written and well-considered essay describing your journey through the course material. Please describe in detail what you have learned about American socio-political structures, your social location within them, and the ways your social location constructs your worldview. In what specific ways has the expanded perspective gained through this course altered your knowledge of yourself and the world? Please incorporate course material (readings, discussions, games, activities, videos) throughout your discussion.

Using Section II. IDENTITY CATEGORIES: GENDER, RACE, AND CLASS of the outline distributed on February 25th, you will:
- Describe the impact of gender, race, and class in your life and how each is evident in your daily experience. You will begin with what you wrote in your *Who Am I*? Part I paper, however you will re-write based on what you've learned this semester as you interrogate the assumptions you had on the first day of class.
- When discussing our course material and how it has encouraged you to re-think your ideas, remember to mention the emotions you experienced as you read and during our class discussions, videos, or other activities. You have written these in your notebook.
- As you write, keep in mind that, although gender, class, and race are socially constructed concepts, they are also real for you. They have real and long term impact in your daily life and over the course of your lifetime in either positive or negative ways, through the advantages or disadvantages they confer. For most of us, some of the impact is positive and some is negative, because our identities are

complex. In some ways we are privileged, in other ways we are oppressed. You will describe this complexity in your life.

Using Section II. AMERICAN SOCIAL STRUCTURES of the outline distributed on February 25th, you will:

- Describe yourself as an individual but also as you now see yourself fitting into the larger social structures in our culture. For instance, how do you fit within our American economic system (capitalism)? What advantages or disadvantages do you have based on your identity/social location? Then you will answer the same questions for our racialized system of white privilege and power, and our American gendered system.
- Outline your socialization process based on your social location within these systems and how it has influenced the development of your self-identity and your worldview (ideology). Questions to consider: What stories have I been told about myself, about others, about my world? What forces have shaped who I am? How do I see others from my social location? How do others see me based on how society values people who belong to my identity groups?
- Through these questions, you will explicitly connect your individual identities to the larger social structures that organize our lives. As a reminder: the main social structures of our society are the institutions of: government (including our economic system), education, the media, religious organizations, parents/family, peers, etc.

Section III. FINAL LEARNING ANALYSIS of your outline distributed on February 25th:

- At this point in your paper, you have already used our course material to describe how it has challenged your assumptions and expanded your perspective on our world (as described on the final page of the outline distributed in class on February 25th.)
- Therefore, for this final section of your paper, please use the Johnson (2001) article as a springboard to articulate changes you plan to make going forward, individually and collectively, toward transforming your communities. Please note: This final reading is attached to the email with my comments on your *Who Am I?* Part II paper.

Final note:
We will discuss the final paper in detail in our next 2 class meetings. I offer these guidelines so you may begin drafting the paper and so you will have this information in writing. In my email to you, I offer specific comments on your *Who Am I?* Part I paper and what you will want to think about as you begin re-drafting for your final paper.

If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to ask!

Rachel

Appendix G: Focus Group - Small Group Questions

Instructor: Rachel Carter
Facilitator: Heidi Faust

PART I
TIME: 45 MINUTES

Small group questions (4 groups of approximately 4-5 members each):
Each group will name one facilitator to ask each question and one timekeeper to ensure that no more than 7 minutes are spent in answering each question.

1) On the first day of class, Rachel asked you to do a "stereotyping" exercise. Do you feel this activity challenged your expectations for this course? If so, in what ways did this activity impact how you experienced the rest of the course?

2) In what ways did Rachel's teaching approach impact your course experience? Please offer an example.

3) What do you consider the most significant idea(s) you have learned through our course? What specifically, either about Rachel's teaching or the course materials (readings, videos, class discussions, activities/games) do you feel had the greatest impact on this learning?

4) Has our course material helped you make sense of what has happened during the Baltimore Uprising that has followed Freddie Gray's death? If so, are there specific materials (readings, videos, class discussions, activities/games) that help you make sense of the response to his death?

5) Did our discussion about change—through the Johnson article and in the discussion at our final class meeting—help you think about how you may use what you've learned this semester as you move forward in your life and career? If so, please share an example of what you've learned about change and your ability to be an agent of change.

6) What unresolved questions or concerns do you have as you leave our course?

Appendix H: Focus Group - Large Group Questions

Instructor: Rachel Carter
Facilitator: Heidi Faust

PART II
TIME: 45 MINUTES

Whole group discussion (facilitated by Heidi Faust):
Heidi will name a timekeeper to ensure responses do not exceed 9 minutes per question.

1) What has the use of storytelling as our major course metaphor meant to you? If you have one, please offer an example of how a story from our class has helped you make sense of the world?
    a. Is there anyone for whom storytelling was not helpful to your course experience?

2) Throughout this course, Rachel has paused to allow you to pay attention to emotions and to write about how you're feeling. How has this focus on emotions worked for you? If you have one, please offer an example of when paying attention to emotions has allowed you to reach a deeper level of analysis around some aspect of gender, class, or race.

3) Did your reflective writing throughout our course help you question your assumptions about gender, class, and race? If so, please offer an example of an assumption you held that was challenged.

4) Has our focus on counter stories allowed you to see an aspect of gender, class, or race from a different perspective? If so, please offer an example of a reading, video, discussion, or other activity/game that has shown you a differing perspective.

5) In this course, Rachel focused on these 4 teaching strategies: storytelling, listening to counter stories, paying attention to emotions, and reflective writing. Have these strategies allowed you to connect your individual experiences to the larger social structures that organize our lives (such as family, school, houses of worship, our government, our economic system)? If so, please offer an example of how these strategies allowed you to connect your individual experience to your larger social context.

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