

CULTIVATING EMOTIONAL CONNECTEDNESS AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING AN ANTIRACIST TEACHING PRACTICE

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This article examines narratives from student discussions in a university course for preservice teachers, focusing particularly on dialogic markers that indicate deep, holistic grappling with race and racism in education that we frame as *emotionally connected*. We frame *emotional connectedness* in critical feminist theories that critique the historical marginalization of emotionality in institutional learning spaces both in the university as well as professional settings. In our examination of the times where we identified student breakthroughs in their understandings of systemic racism in education, we argue that cultivating *emotionally connected* stances in new teachers is crucial to their processes of building a deep understanding of the ways that systemic racism operates in education and developing an antiracist teaching practice.

As teachers of inquiry-based classes supported through whole-class discussions, our own learning about our students and practice is often based on powerful moments of student discourse: instances of dialogue where students articulate complex thoughts, ideas, and confusions, and direct their narratives to each other, decentering the instructor as the only producer of knowledge in the classroom. Within these moments, we are given a glimpse into complicated questions, thoughts, and epiphanies that students bring to the learning space. These markers of powerful learning are much more messy, complex, and nuanced than quantitative

assessments such as test scores, however they provide a deeply authentic look at how students are making sense of learning materials and coconstructing knowledge in the classroom.

In our course for preservice teachers, our goal is to explore both the sociocultural foundations of learning and the historical inequities embedded in schooling systems and their implications for the experiences of K–12 youth in urban classrooms, particularly Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. We situate our exploration of the aforementioned powerful moments of student discourse within two sections of a human development and learning

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(HDL) course that holds a mix of undergraduate and graduate students learning to be elementary and secondary teachers. While each of our sections vary slightly in scope and sequence, our underlying shared goal as instructors is to create space for students to construct a sociocultural framing to learning and explore knowledge and skills to build anti-racist teaching practices. It cannot be ignored that systemic racism continues to sabotage student success in school, as schools are microcosms of a larger society in which Black, Indigenous, and people of color are denied economic and social opportunities and policed and punished at much higher rates than White people (e.g., hooks 1994; Marable, 2008; Royal, 2013). It is well documented that Black students are disciplined more heavily and receive less support in schools than White students (Davidson, 1996; Fine, 1994; Gregory et al., 2010; Lawton-Sticklor, 2018; Torre & Fine, 2006). In addition to lack of support, students of color are forced to engage with a curriculum that excludes their histories, cultures, and accomplishments, focusing instead on emphasizing histories and literature centered on Europeans and their descendants across the world (e.g., Ware & Ware, 1995).

The teacher education program in which our course is housed is located in a racially diverse urban community and students matriculating through the program are predominantly White, mirroring a widespread disparity in the representation of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in the national teaching force (D'Amico et al., 2017; Matias & Mackey, 2016). As preservice teachers are preparing to enter into the teaching force, they will most certainly be faced with working within the aforementioned structures. For those who are White, many do not recognize that these structures exist, since they benefit from the support and representation built into school practices and curricula. Thus, in order to mitigate the harm caused to students by teachers who do not understand the fundamentally racist system that exists, teachers must build actively

antiracist practices, as Cochran-Smith (1991, 2001) puts it: teaching against the grain.

Most students in our course readily engage with complex issues relating to race in schools. However, it is not lost on us that we are asking them to engage with subject matter that elicits feelings of guilt, grief, anger, and deep vulnerability. University classrooms are not designed to hold those messy and complex feelings that call us to support one another as a collective while we grapple with the risks of allowing ourselves to feel deeply in a public space. The physical and intellectual space of a university classroom is typically designed for individual, intellectual, disconnected study. Seating is often designed as individual workstations that are placed in rows, preventing learners from making eye contact with each other and making it difficult to facilitate humanizing practices such as learning each other's names, holding space for silence, and deeply listening to each other. In our university, desks are often physically attached to one another in rows, making it arduous and time consuming to pull them apart to arrange in a circle. Classrooms are often devoid of artwork, comfortable furnishings, color, and other aspects of comfort and creativity. These physical arrangements, as well as strict zero-tolerance university academic integrity policies discourage idea sharing and collaboration unless it is prescribed to certain projects, therefore the baseline for academic work and assessment is that it is an individual responsibility. Students are often sent messages from early on in school that universities are spaces where no one will *coddle* them (e.g., Lawton-Sticklor, 2018), that they must, as individuals, learn to keep up with the rigorous demands of an intellectual space without asking for support.

Within spaces that do not encourage emotionality, complex feelings often manifest as anger and defensiveness from White students (Matias et al., 2014). But anger and defensiveness are reactive responses that not only hinder individual and collective learning, but can cause immense harm to students of color in the space. As Audre Lorde puts it "Guilt and defensiveness are bricks in a wall against

which we all flounder; they serve none of our futures” (Lorde, 1984, p. 124)

It is not surprising to us that when powerfully emotional moments of student discourse occur, they stand out to us in the way that they contrast with implicit university dialogic norms, showing a deep understanding of the course material that is housed not just in an intellectual framework, but a reflexive and emotional one. We have come to define these moments, marked by a reflexive awareness of structures and systems that goes beyond intellectualizing as *emotionally connected*. These moments of emotional connectedness display an understanding not just of personal connection with course material, but a sense of situatedness within a societal system; in these moments students are able to see the way that their deeply contextual identities not only impact their experiences, but also their understandings of social issues such as racism in schools. As instructors, we have attempted to break many of these physical and intellectual academic norms by arranging desks in circles and assigning readings by authors who have first-hand experiences of the social issues we cover: women, queer, Black, Indigenous, and other writers, researchers, and academics of color. We practice these pedagogical strategies in order to create space for more emotionally connected learning and move toward an embodied practice (Thompson, 2017) that welcomes the whole person into a cocreated learning space. However, as “successful” products of the academic system ourselves, we recognize that we have also been socialized into an scholarly space that welcomes just one part of us, our intellect, and encourages the rest of us—our emotional, physical, and spiritual selves—to hide behind a sense of objective fairness and professionalism. As Thompson, a former teacher of Nastasia writes:

Teachers carry our minds to one place (to work, the classroom, our desks), our bodies to another (to the gym, yoga studio, or couch), our spirit to another (to church, synagogue, mosque, mountains), our psychic healing to another (to the couch, the bed, to

vacations), and our activism to another (to prisons, borders, the streets). Students sense and feel these splits. They are trying to learn amid these splits. And we are, somehow, trying to teach amid these splits. (p. 17)

Given the physical and implicit norms that create these splits in academic spaces, it is not surprising that the emotionally connected contributions of students strike us not only in the contrast they present to much of the dialogue produced in our class, but in the rarity of these moments, which feel to us something like witnessing a quick and brilliant meteor, that we both excitedly rehash in our postclass debriefs, and long for more of. This paper explores moments of emotionally connected student dialogue in two cofacilitated sections of HDL. We identify as teacher researchers; our research practice being deeply embedded in our pedagogies (Ballenger, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). As teachers, we are attuned to these emotionally connected moments in real time as students put forth messy, reflexive, and vulnerable reflections that situate them as raced, classed, gendered beings within a societal collective. As researchers, we document all of our discussions through field notes and audio-recorded classes and debriefs and can confirm or problematize the impact these student contributions had on us in real time, as well as in looking back over the data at the context in which these moments occurred. This paper looks specifically at two cases that highlight moments of powerful learning seen through student contributions to class discussions and theorizes on the concept of emotionally connected learning in this context.

Our practice as teacher researchers led us to use our data (field notes and audio-recordings) to pull out the moments that we reacted to in real time and in our debriefs to study the language and discourse, both contributions that struck us, as well as the adjacent and responsive dialogue that could provide us with context around these narratives. Going back through the data together led us to engage in the practice of identifying and grounding what we have come to

see as a spectrum of intellectual analysis and emotional connectedness. As we parse out the markers that we observe to be connected with each of these stances, we see that they have the potential to work together in producing a space for dialogue that is both intellectually rigorous and emotionally connected. While these stances often seem to conflict, we believe this conflict is not authentic, but rather is manufactured by the norms of academic spaces that privilege intellectualism. At the core of this conflict, we believe that within traditional academic spaces we have been “trained” out of our abilities to hold the deep vulnerability of being emotionally connected in public spaces, and as a result intellectual analysis takes over as a way to engage with an important issue but remain safely distanced from our human connection with it (Warren & Hytten, 2004).

While this distance occurring from intellectualizing might make us, particularly White people, feel more comfortable in public spaces of learning, it prevents us from engaging fully with crucial issues that we seek to address. Without fully activating our whole selves in understanding racism in schools, we can never accomplish our task of dismantling it. As Bettina Love (2019) points out, “Too often, we think the work of fighting oppression is just intellectual. The real work is personal, emotional, spiritual, and communal” (p. 22). There is abundant literature that affirms the power and value of emotionally connected practices in spaces that both predate the dominant Western paradigm of research and learning, such as Wilson’s (2008) work on indigenous paradigms of research, and actively challenge intellectualizing spaces, such as theories of hope and radical healing (e.g., Ginwright, 2015). Scholars and activists have built antiracist teaching practices and pedagogies that have transformed the way we look at teaching, such as culturally relevant pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012), critical care (Antrop-González & Dejesus, 2006; Valenzuela 1999), and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Work in critical Whiteness pedagogy (Matias, 2016; Matias et al., 2014; Matias & Mckey, 2016) has

underscored the importance of White educators not just knowing the endemic role of Whiteness as a construct in fashioning the systems we live in, but emotionally investing in understanding our roles within them.

These theories have driven our practices in higher education, both as a model for helping preservice teachers build antiracist practices, and as a fundamental value of teaching for ourselves. These theories underscore the need to bring our full humanity in engaging with issues like racism in educational systems, providing an antidote to the stripping away of our emotional selves in the work of understanding oppression and building antioppressive stances.

With the goal of recapturing our wholeness in learning spaces, we focus on how we might create classrooms that support preservice teachers in developing a deeper understanding of systemic racism in education and think about how they as practitioners can cultivate an antiracist teaching practice. We use critical feminist theory (CFT; e.g., Boler, 1999; hooks, 1992; Thompson, 2017), as well as theories of critical care and empathy (e.g., Antrop-González & Dejesus, 2006; Berlant, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999; Zembylas, 2012) to ground our practice and pedagogies as teachers. In doing so we argue that the tenets of CFT, such as bringing emotionality and intuition into academic spaces, is crucial to addressing the emotional, physical, and spiritual implications of inequity (Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015). CFT emphasizes the historically gendered nature of human emotion, particularly functioning to exclude women, nonbinary, and gender fluid people from spaces of power; political, economic, and intellectual. Emotions have been feminized; that is women and feminine people have been assigned identities as nurturing, emotional, empathic, and as a result, fragile, irrational, and unable to participate in and contribute to rational thought (Boler, 1999). At the same time, women are forced into bearing emotional labor in home, work, and academic environments, managing not only their own emotions, but those of people around them

(Hochschild, 2015). This paradox played out on a national scale in 2016 as the first female presidential nominee was simultaneously questioned about whether she could be trusted to hold the keys to the nuclear codes given the perception of women's tendencies toward irrationality and expected to be calm and measured during debates with a highly emotional male opponent. Critical feminist theories recognize that emotion is public, relational, and fundamentally human, and has been intentionally and systematically removed from academic and political spaces as a function of subordination. While emotions have been both feminized and devalued, the consequences play out across all genders; the resulting in a privileging of "masculine," logical, rational thought processes forcing all of us to deny our vulnerable, emotional selves and embody a stance of intellectualization, particularly in academic spaces. While women, transgender, gender fluid, and nonbinary people are subjugated in these spaces, cisgender men also bear the burden of rejecting their wholeness in favor of so-called rationality and logic in learning spaces.

CFT also recognizes that systems of oppression are deeply linked, so that emotion has not only been gendered, it has been racialized as well (Durr & Harvey Wingfield, 2011; Wingfield, 2010). The racialized misogyny experienced by Black women in particular plays out in both gendered emotional labor and racialized experiences of dehumanization (Kelly et al., 2019). The silencing of emotions has been particularly felt by Black women, who have, as Audre Lorde put it "had compassion for everybody but ourselves" (1984, p. 62). In recognizing feminism as racialized, it is crucial not to overlook the ways in which Black women have not only borne the brunt of misogyny, but have been marginalized within feminist movements led by White women. Therefore in using critical feminist theories to bring emotionality in the classroom we must resist the norm of centering White emotionality without holding space for the emotions of Black Indigenous and other people, particularly of color. As Patricia Hill Collins (1996)

reminded us, "Black women's texts are still very much more welcomed than Black women ourselves" (p. 9). As we move forward in building spaces that compel White educators to build a deeper emotional connection to their experiences and roles within White supremacist systems, it is crucial to build in the understanding that the very emotion we are trying to lean into has itself been racialized.

Our goal within this framework is to help preservice teachers move beyond building a *nonracist* teaching practice where a teacher focuses on individual behavior that avoids discrimination and stereotyping, to an *antiracist* practice wherein teachers can build pedagogical practices that contextualize their roles within the inherently racist nature of schooling institutions, holding themselves accountable both for their individual actions and the way their various identities shape their experiences and understandings (King, 2016). We have chosen CFT as a framework for our pedagogical practices knowing that White supremacy and patriarchy are inextricably linked, and while many have taken up the mantle of feminism without properly acknowledging the connection with racism, there can be no true feminism without antiracism (Carastathis, 2014; Crenshaw, 1990; Davis, 2016; Srivastava, 2005). Therefore, the connection between building a pedagogical practice rooted in feminism with the goal of practicing antiracism feels deeply connected to our goals. A critical feminist framework gives us the tools of emotionality, care, vulnerability, and relationality to do the work of antiracism, which allows us to more deeply engage our whole selves with the work of dismantling institutional oppression in our educational system.

GROUNDING INTELLECTUALIZATION AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTEDNESS

The practice of defining these two stances of intellectualization and emotional connected-

ness separately has allowed us to explore and grapple with the markers that indicate the presence of each in student dialogue. We use this exploration to interrogate the types of classroom spaces we are creating as teachers, specifically pertaining to themes of racial justice and our commitment to critical, antiracist teacher education (Bartolome, 1994; Delpit, 2012; Fine, 1994; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Paris, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999). We see intellectualizing and emotional connectedness in the classroom as two places on a fluid spectrum, rather than a binary characteristic of student discourse. Moreover, we do not see intellectual discourse as the antithesis of emotional connectedness per se, rather, it is the absence of emotional connectedness within intellectual discourse that we see as *intellectualization*. We see all of our students as whole complex people who move in and out of these spaces, sometimes inhabiting both simultaneously. Therefore, we do not define our students as intellectualizing analyzers or emotionally connected, rather we use their narratives as dialogic tools to identify and characterize markers of intellectualizing analysis or emotional connectedness within the discourse. As we define and theorize on these two forms of discourse, our positioning as teacher researchers also leads us to inquire into how to facilitate spaces where academic discussions can be grounded in emotional connectedness.

EMOTIONAL CONNECTEDNESS

Critical feminist theories and theories of empathy and care guide our definition of emotional connectedness and ground the pedagogies we believe can cultivate it in the classroom (e.g., Antrop-González & Dejesus, 2006; Berlant, 2008; Boler, 1999; hooks, 1992; Thompson, 2017; Valenzuela, 1999; Zembylas, 2012). Emotional connectedness challenges the dominant academic norm of individualizing and privatization of emotion and its role in learning, and situates emotion as a necessary public, collective, relational interaction in learning

spaces such as classrooms. Emotional connectedness is not necessarily the outward display of emotion per se, but rather a sense of deep vulnerability and reflexivity as we seek to situate ourselves within a collective: interrogating and unpacking our positionalities, as well as our agency within the social systems. In the context of our work with preservice teachers, emotional connectedness opens up space for us to move beyond an intellectual understanding of oppression, into a space of understanding that as members of society we are all deeply connected to it. As we begin to understand ourselves and our roles within the education system at large, it becomes inadequate to focus on symptoms of such a system—manifested in student outcomes, behaviors, engagement, etc. Instead, emotional connectedness requires us to work toward a deep understanding of the root causes of these symptoms (Matias & Mackey, 2016). Being able to see beyond symptoms and moving into a learning space that can account for both our individual roles within education as well as the systemic forces of subordination that influence our experiences within it can bring us to a deeply powerful place of learning *and* acting.

When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable we can open up to the difficult work of seeing and connecting ourselves to inequity as an intentional system and working to dismantle it. We envision emotional connectedness as engaging with aspects of both sympathy and empathy in order to help us form deeper connections to issues of race and racism. Whereas Escalas and Stern (2003) define sympathy as “with-feeling,” a concern for the feelings of someone else, and empathy as “in-feeling,” the absorption of another’s feeling, we see emotional connectedness as drawing from both. White educators must understand that they can never truly know the lived experiences of people of color, therefore true empathy, “vicariously merg[ing] with another’s feelings” (Escalas & Stern, 2003, p. 567) overlooks the importance of understanding the limitations of the White experience. However while sympathy can show care and concern for another’s

experiences, there can still be a sense of disconnection. Therefore emotional connectedness can be situated in a place of sympathetic solidarity; housed within the understanding that we may never truly understand another's experience, *and* our collective freedom is bound together.

For White educators in particular, emotional connectedness requires us to problematize neutrality. While intellectualization allows White people to engage in distanced study of racism from a "neutral" standpoint (Warren & Hytten, 2004), emotional connectedness necessitates placing ourselves as agents within an inequitable system. Instead of identifying the self solely as individual, emotional connectedness compels us to realize ourselves as a part of a collective, in this case both as a classroom learning community and as members of the teaching profession. As such, it becomes inadequate to simply be a "good person" in a classroom, rather we must, as Matias and Mackey (2016) write, "bind [our] racial liberation to that of [our] urban students of color" (p. 35) constantly interrogating the ways in which our implicit socialization perpetuates and reifies systemic inequity. Thus, emotional connectedness is a call to action; a realization that it is insufficient to simply study and be aware of inequity: effective teaching requires us to work toward dismantling the systemic sources of it.

INTELLECTUALIZING ANALYSIS

In contrast to the wholeness and vulnerability of emotional connectedness, intellectualizing is grounded in a fragmentation of ourselves that only allows our analytic minds to engage with issues such as White supremacy. Within the specific context of racism in the educational system, this appears to play out as engaging with individual incidents and experiences that appear to be problematic, with a focus on manufacturing solutions for each case. In more extreme cases of intellectualizing, individual agency is viewed as both the primary mecha-

nism for success, as well as explanatory factors for students who struggle. This form of intellectualizing takes on neoliberal theories of race such as color-evasiveness,¹ which holds "the central assumption that race has no valence as a marker of identity or power when factored into the social vocabulary of everyday life and the capacity for exercising individual and social agency" (Giroux, 2003, p. 198). On a less extreme end of the intellectualizing range, racism is recognized as playing a role in whether or not students succeed in school, however it is not seen as structural White supremacy, but rather as the actions of a few actors who display blatant discrimination against students of color (King, 2016). The range of intellectualizing discourse plays out in several ways in the university classroom, by focusing on placing sole agency (and therefore responsibility) on students for their success, or naming specific pedagogical practices that are discriminatory, and therefore should be avoided. Many intellectualizing narratives assume students do not care about their learning or that families do not value education as a way to explain disengagement or nonvisible family involvement. This is not to say that intellectualizing narratives cannot express care about issues of racism in schools. As Warren and Hytten (2004) theorize, an intellectualizing stance can manifest in a willingness and desire to engage with these issues,

actively seeking information, actively working toward becoming more familiar with the theories and arguments made by the researchers. And while they are actively investigating the literature, they do so in a very distanced manner; that is, they never locate the study and analysis of Whiteness in their own experience. (p. 329)

A distanced stance indicates the split between the intellectual and the emotional, spiritual and communal. This intellectualizing view holds space for individualism, but not collective, and for reflective analysis without reflexivity. Rather than being situated in solidarity, intellectualization may offer detached

sympathy or even pity. We see a crucial aspect of this distance as particularly prohibitive of powerful learning when confronted with issues of racism in education; the avoidance of implicating oneself as an agent within an inherently racist system. Particularly for White people, without the guidance of our emotional, spiritual and physical selves, our intellects allow us to analyze racism from a distance. If we cannot bring our emotional selves, if we cannot read and respond to the signals that our bodies send us, if we cannot see ourselves as part of a collective, we are ill-equipped to close the distance that an intellectualizing stance creates between ourselves and issues of oppression. As a result, intellectualizing leads us to create narratives such as labeling the system as broken, rather than intentionally designed to separate the oppressed from the oppressors (Royal, 2013), or that “good people” cannot be racist (Okun, 2010). Intellectualizing cannot equip us to fully engage with the immense power of the structural design of education, and while it may create pockets of good learning in individual classrooms, these isolated spaces do not effectively serve to create large scale change within the system, nor do they support an anti-racist teaching practice.

Within a schooling system that clearly prioritizes intellectualization, we see that the types of solutions to racism in schools that are being proposed are limited to policy changes or pedagogical strategies that are designed to solve symptoms and improve students’ day to day experiences in school. This manifests in surface-level interpretations of racism as a series of adverse experiences in school felt by students of color. Therefore, the solutions are also superficial, such as incorporating students’ interests into lesson plans, various attempts to socialize families into dominant educational practices, and other best practices meant to improve student outcomes. This is not to say that these practices are totally meaningless, but rather that an intellectualizing stance conflates students’ interests and students’ humanity. Lessons that treat cultural diversity simply as the foods, holidays, and

languages of various racial and ethnic groups but fail to value and hold space for cultural definitions of knowledges, spiritual and secular belief systems, familial, ancestral, communal, and land-based relationalities and other important forms of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) do not humanize diversity, but simply add a specter of personalization. These superficial strategies are rampant in educational literature, as Bartolome (1994) points out, as policymakers and educators continue to produce new practices designed to promote student success that rarely address the underlying structural factors that inhibit students of color from thriving in the classroom.

RESEARCHING PRACTICE

Our theories on emotional connectedness and intellectualization grew out of our research, rather than informing it from the start. This emergent process follows a framework of practitioner research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 2009), recognizing the recursive, cyclical, and emergent nature of inquiry. Questions evolve and findings emerge within a sustained, systematic collection of data (audio-recordings, field notes, collaborative debriefs from classes). We ground our practitioner research framework also in critical feminist theories around emotionality, that prioritize both the empirical and the intuitive, valuing the organic emergence of data within an intentional and systematic investigation of what is happening inside our classrooms. Instead of formulating research questions and coding the corpus data with the goal of answering these questions, we went back to places in the data that had immediately struck us in our postclass debriefs and allowed these emergent themes to guide a few essential questions that we refer back to in our work. These essential questions pertain to how we can learn to recognize when students are engaging in an emotionally connected way, and how we might encourage and cultivate emotional connectedness using pedagogies informed by critical feminist frameworks.

In our work, we commit ourselves to a stance of “research *with*” that separates itself from and challenges a more traditional framework of research *on*. This is both a methodological and epistemological stance. A traditional methodological model of observing a culture or community and extracting information to be used outside of that space without necessarily impacting it can be dehumanizing. Furthermore, a traditional epistemological model of research *on* assumes that we can accurately capture and share another’s knowledge and lived reality through research without interrogating the impact that our own agendas, positionalities and stances have, as well as the ways in which our research may actually disempower or dehumanize (Alcoff, 1991). While some methodologies are designed specifically to counter this process (e.g., Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Clark-Ibáñez, 2007), others, such as our practice of audio-recording classroom spaces, are not. Therefore it is crucial that within any research that we undertake, we dedicate space to grapple with our epistemological commitments to avoid researching *on* our students. Instead our inquiry is focused on our practice as instructors: our classroom pedagogy and facilitation of classroom dialogue, our decisions around choosing specific texts, and how we use the knowledge constructed through this process of inquiry to improve our practice. We also focus on the classroom space itself, using dialogue from students to help us interrogate how we set up spaces of learning. Our commitment to a framework of research *with* is messy and at times nebulous. We use our relationship with each other as research partners to create and maintain a system of checks and balances that constantly interrogates our methodological, theoretical, and analytical frameworks to avoid researching *on* our students. In practice, we often ask each other: “does my analysis present as research on our students, or research on the space and our practice?” We ask this question particularly in our individual and collaborative analyses of transcripts, using the collaborative space to check our individual analyses for alignment with our

epistemological principles of research *with*. While research *with* is not the focus of this paper per se, we uphold it as a general framework for our work as practitioner inquirers as a way to interrogate and grapple with the power dynamics of researching a space inhabited by students that we teach.

Data for this research on our teaching were collected over the course of three semesters of our cotaught HDL course for preservice teachers. HDL is a required course for all students matriculating in the university’s master’s in teaching program. During fall semesters, the course comprises undergraduate seniors, most of whom will be entering into the master’s in teaching program for the following year. During spring semesters, the course comprises a mix of undergraduate seniors and current master’s in teaching candidates, most of whom completed their undergraduate degree at a different institution. Nastasia was the lead instructor during one fall semester, and Kate was lead instructor during two spring semesters. Although the lead instructor for each semester designed the curriculum, the process was a collaborative effort, with open communication and input. The result was that the curriculum varied slightly in sequence, assigned readings and pedagogical strategies, however the core themes of both semesters were centered on taking using sociocultural approach to gain a deeper understanding of the inequitable systems in which youth in schools are making sense of learning. We chose to alternate between lead and nonlead roles instead of cofacilitating both semesters. While one of us took on the lead role, the other maintained heavy involvement in the course, attending each class meeting and building relationships with students. During each semester the nonlead instructor took field notes and participated in class. We received consent from students to audio record all class discussions and had selected audio recordings transcribed. We met weekly to engage in audio-recorded debriefs from each class. We used these debriefs as unstructured thought-partner spaces (Lawton-Sticklor & Bodamer, 2016). Debriefs consisted

of going over the field notes, summarizing and analyzing our noticings on how our students were making sense of course texts and data through class discussions. These collaborative debriefs of our reactions to class discussions allowed us to inquire into our practice as instructors, particularly in instances of confusion, surprise, and puzzlement over student narratives. For the class discussions that we wanted to look deeper into, we had audio-recordings professionally transcribed. We read and analyzed each transcript individually, then came together to analyze collaboratively. These individual and subsequent collaborative analyses of selected transcripts allowed us to check on our initial real time and debrief noticings and reactions to classroom dialogue, giving us an opportunity to perform a check for interrater reliability on our real-time responses to student dialogue.

For this article, we chose to focus on two instances that had emerged as striking to us both in real time, and in our subsequent debriefs: one from the fall, and one from the following spring. We had referred to these instances in multiple of our joint reflections, repeatedly coming back to our puzzlement and interest around the student dialogues that took place. These two instances gave us space to grapple with and deepen our understanding of how we might facilitate spaces that cultivate the emotional, physical and collective spaces that could support critical and emotionally connected interrogation of the institution of education, and support students in grappling with their own agency, positionalities, and identities within that institution.

While we chose to conduct a deeper analysis on these two instances, they were not the only times that these particular issues emerged through student dialogue. As we looked at the transcripts from these two instances, our individual and collective analysis confirmed that there was something important for us to consider in the ways that students made sense of the assigned texts and dialogue from their classmates. Both discussions illuminated an emerging pattern that we were noticing

throughout the course related to grappling with the implications of racism in the education system. As students wrestled with this concept repeatedly throughout the course, we noticed that within their discourse grappling with the issue of systemic racism in education we saw markers of dialogue that approached the issue with *intellectualizing analysis* as well as markers that struck us as emotionally connected.

Since our theorizing of emotional connectedness and intellectualization resists binary categorization we present the data as vignettes that illustrate the layered interconnectedness of how our students grappled with their identities of becoming teachers in an unjust educational system. Organizing data into vignettes also facilitates our own grappling with our instructional roles to try to cultivate a space in which students confronted complexity around systemic racism in education.

In the first vignette, we explore narrative contributions to a whole-class dialogue, as one student expressed concern of perpetuating their socialization by teaching a euro-centric curriculum that silences students of color. The narratives generated by classmates in response attempted to allay those concerns, giving assurances that simple strategies would address concerns about harming students with oppressive pedagogy. This vignette is striking as it appeared to us as an intellectual response to an emotionally connected narrative.

In the second vignette, we analyze a particular student response to three assigned readings (Delgado-Gaitan 1994; Valenzuela 1999; Yosso, 2005). Every student in the class was asked to choose a quote or passage that resonated with them and share it with the class. All three articles, written by women of color, explored both the inequities endemic in school systems primarily based on race but also touching on economic status, as well as the strengths that students and communities of color build in order to navigate an oppressive system. This particular response struck both of us in real time as particularly powerful and it contains markers of emotional connectedness within our framework. It was particularly

notable in the context of other responses, which appeared to us as containing more markers of intellectualizing analysis.

In our presentation and analysis of the two vignettes, we attempt to separate narratives from the people who said them as much as possible. We note that all narratives presented in this paper come from White students, but we have, for the most part, avoided discussing in depth any characteristics of students themselves (gender, class, experience with teaching, etc.). Our analysis focuses on the dialogue itself, and not the personal characteristics or perceived stances of students. We recognize that as humans we cannot separate our identities and lived realities from the ways in which we make sense of the world. However, we feel that in this data analysis it is important to avoid the temptation to classify students as *being* emotionally connected or intellectualizing. We feel it is important to recognize that classroom dialogue is responsive to a social space, and not necessarily wholly representative of the people who produce them. In other words, by presenting the dialogue as separate from the people, we are attempting to preserve the complexity and humanity of our students by not reducing them to the attitudes and stances encompassed in one small piece of their narratives across a 15-week course. Rather, we present these data as an opportunity to begin to recognize the markers of emotional connectedness and intellectualization. As we become more familiar with how these markers appear in dialogue, we may be able to interrogate our own practices and commitments to cultivate spaces that support students engaging in emotionally connected dialogue as it applies to understanding race in education and building a practice of antiracist teaching. In the following two vignettes, we have labeled the narratives that we delve into with a deeper analytical lens Main Narrative 1 (MN1) and Main Narrative 2 (MN2). Other narratives in the vignettes we identify as adjacent narratives.

Vignette 1

Vignette 1 came from a course discussion where students interacted with each other, with little input from the instructor. Course readings focused on the ways in which classroom learning across the curriculum is designed around a White, male, middle class set of values, and children for whom that does not fit are often labeled as “disengaged,” or “problematic” if they do not conform to this set of learning values (e.g., Bang et al, 2012; Delpit, 2012; Duckworth, 2006). In the main narrative of this vignette (MN1), a student expressed deep worry that in the Eurocentric socialization that she had received, noting specifically the concern that in simply teaching what she had learned, she would end up harming her students as a result of the learned assumptions and practices that are embedded in euro-centricity, which is a product of White supremacy (e.g., Spencer et al, 2001).

I get nervous because it's like, I want to be a teacher who does not teach a Eurocentric education, like curriculum, but how do I do that when that's all I know? So I feel like for me I'm really nervous right now because I feel like I have to learn a lot in a very short period of time ... and I'm really willing to make that commitment but I feel like I need time and that I don't have time but I need to make time so I, I don't know I'm just like, I'm very nervous. (MN1)

Three of the response narratives to the main narrative are noted:

First Response: Your students teach you a lot so if you're open and if you're listening to your students you will learn so much and they will teach you so much about the things you don't know that you really shouldn't be afraid of them.”

Second Response: Also you're going into teaching as a profession, you're going to be doing this for a long time, there's so much time to learn more and like, become a better teacher with every class that you teach so yeah, there's no need to be nervous and think

that over the summer you need to be a perfect teacher.

Third Response: One small thing you can do when you get into teaching is ... just being consciously aware of just like even like the night, day before you teach a lesson from a textbook read through what's in the book and then just be like "I can skip this problem or I can just change the setting and use the same numbers, little things like that just to make it more culturally relevant."

The main narrative and subsequent response narratives struck us for several reasons. The main narrative showed a sense of reflexivity and systemic thinking; realizing that there was an urgent need to actively work against Eurocentric socialization in order to disrupt inequitable practices as a teacher. The narrative also showed vulnerability, publicly displaying a sense of nervousness and concern, as well as a sense of not knowing: both in the realization that such a socialization is not only harmful, but also limiting in the knowledge it allows, as well as in the ways in which teachers must overcome those limitations in order to build an antiracist teaching practice. We saw several poignant markers of emotional connectedness, that moved beyond the mention of emotions such as worry and nervousness: the first being an awareness of the speaker as being situated in a society that uses race as criteria for either privilege or oppression, and the second being the framing of this socialization as a force that had a limiting and harmful effect. This narrative recognized this socialization as having produced an incomplete body of knowledge, with the call narrative recognizing that "[Eurocentricity is] ... all I know." The harm that produced this worry was recognized as twofold: both in the limiting effect it had on the bodies of knowledge that the producer of this narrative had constructed up to this point, and the harm that these limitations would cause others, particularly students of color.

Within the vulnerability of this narrative is a sense of urgency and impact. The narrative expressed a sense of being "very worried" and

feeling conflicted about how the learning that was needed could actually happen: "I need time and ... I don't have time but I need to make time." The urgency was apparent, as well as a sense of knowing that the stakes are high. In particular, the call narrative in this vignette acknowledged that this Eurocentric socialization was tied to something real and pressing: curriculum that would presumably have a significant and harmful impact on students in the imminent future. This acknowledgment situates the learning in a context that is not just about the individual producer of this narrative, but rather as a member of two collectives, a community of learners in this course and a community of future teachers.

In contrast, the narratives that were more intellectually analyzing did not appear to acknowledge either urgency, or an awareness of impact on others. In particular, the second response narrative of this vignette encouraged the practice of taking one's time to become better at teaching, arguing that "there's no need to be nervous and think that over the summer you need to be a perfect teacher." The concept of improving over time is certainly not unreasonable. Indeed, the vast majority of educators could agree that we are better teachers now than we were 5, or even 2 years ago. However, the narrative that we marked as emotionally connected contained a stance that we argue all educators should have: the awareness of the impact that our practice has on our students while we are in the process of improving.

The main narrative (MN1) struck us as an invitation to grapple with how to cultivate a socially conscious, antiracist teaching practice beyond best practices or classroom management. In this invitation, we saw the vulnerability, reflexivity, and contextual situatedness of an emotionally connected narrative. We also saw that this narrative grappled with the potential harm caused to students without getting defensive. We found, however, that this invitation was met with responses that we found to be grounded in intellectualization. These responses contained markers such as proposing solutions that made surface-level tweaks to

teaching practice such as incorporating student interest and modifying textbook language that could address the symptoms of Eurocentricity, without much attention to the root causes. While supportive and sympathetic, student responses to this grappling were strategic and intellectual; which allowed for an avoidance of grappling together in a reflexive manner.

Vignette 2

In this vignette, students discussed Yosso's (2005) text about community cultural wealth, Delgado-Gaitan's (1994) piece on family support, and an excerpt from Valenzuela's (1999) book about critical care, which all challenge dominant narratives about social capital, cultural resources, and care. Students were asked to engage with one passage, concept, or quote from any of the three texts that stood out to them. In the main narrative (MN2) of this vignette, a student responded to a quote about Yosso's (2005) concept of resistant capital:

So, um, I loved the Yosso piece um because as like, a White woman, who grew up in like a really wealthy town, with like, a really good education system, I still have so much learning to do when it comes to this stuff. So I thought the quote that I would share would be, like a way to like, show something new I learned. So, on page 80, the sixth, um, the sixth theory on cultural capital is resistant capital. And the quote I'll share, um, is um, "a research group shows a group of African American mothers who consciously raise their daughters as resisters. Through verbal and nonverbal lessons, these Black mothers teach their daughters to assert themselves as intelligent, beautiful, strong, and worthy of respect, to resist the barrage of societal messages devaluing Blackness and belittling Black women." And about seven lines down it says "these young women are learning to be oppositional with their bodies, minds, and spirits in the face of race, gender, and class inequality." Um, and this was powerful, and moving for me to read, um, to read again, and also the example that they gave about the Japanese internment camps, that these com-

munities resisted racism by maintaining and nurturing various forms of cultural wealth, um. Reading things like this is just consistently like a slap in the face, like "hey wake up, look around, and understand better." (MN2)

This narrative, which struck us as emotionally connected, engaged with an embodied emotional and physical experience of reading and learning from Yosso's (2005) theories on community cultural wealth. Specifically, this narrative engaged with a piece from the text that was instructive and challenging, and that compelled the student to think about her own situatedness as a raced, classed, gendered being, rather than pulling out a section that connected to a personal experience, as many narratives did. The phrase "wake up, look around, and understand better" struck us in that it contained a deep vulnerability, implying that the producer of this narrative had felt that she had, in fact, been asleep. Within this narrative there appeared to be a deep grappling with the speaker's perception of her lack of knowledge or awareness—something that was rare in our classrooms, as many narratives instead contained analyses, took positions, or used experience or previous knowledge to construct a point. Like MN1, this narrative took into account the inherent harm that comes from ignorance without getting defensive. This narrative appeared to ground itself within the problematic implications of generalizing knowledge gained through dominant racial individual experience. Whereas many other narratives grappled with self-reflection, using personal experience to either connect or contrast arguments made in the readings, this narrative deepened self-reflection into reflexivity, grappling with the limitations of building knowledge based on individual experience.

The markers of emotional connectedness in this narrative stood out in the midst of adjacent narratives responding to the same pieces. This is not to say that other students did not put forth engaged narratives indicative of careful reading and synthesis of the text. In fact, many of the narratives that made us grapple the most

were narratives that contained what we believe could be close to, or moving toward emotional connectedness, yet did not contain the same reflexivity and “un-distancing” that this first narrative did. As an example, the following narrative, responding to Delgado-Gaitan (1994) concerning barriers of economic status in schools proved to be an important dialogic tool in our grappling, as it contained several surface markers of emotional connectedness, yet still seemed to be positioned within a framework of individual analysis:

I had a quote ... um it says, “yes, we can only encourage them, but when it comes to money, it’s impossible,” and I guess this quote really made me, just really reminded me of my privilege once again because I felt like, um, my dad is a doctor but he hates being a doctor so for a while in high school he took a break, and we didn’t make any money for the longest time, but he kept telling me and my brothers that if we ever needed money he would become a doctor again so we could do whatever we wanted to do and that’s what happened, we needed more money so he became a doctor again. So there was always like a Plan B, like always a way, but I guess in these kind of situations, it’s literally, you know, like a brick wall. If you don’t have money, then it’s just, find another thing, cause it’s never gonna happen. And I wonder, I mean, I like the fact that in this part ... he wanted to be a lawyer ... everyone kept saying it’s gonna be really hard to be a lawyer, because it costs a lot of money to go to law school. I don’t know, it made me sad.

This narrative contained emotion and personal connection as it contrasted personal experience of the students’ family with that of the family featured in the text. While it would appear that any narrative containing a form of emotion would be marked as emotionally connected, we have theorized that emotional connectedness is not simply *feeling*, but allowing emotionality to situate us within a systemic context. This narrative grappled with the emotion stemming from one family’s plight with

economically driven barriers to educational attainment, but did not examine how systemic racism and class inequity create conditions across spaces and generations that impact how youth are able to thrive in school.

The third narrative we pulled out from this discussion served as a valuable dialogic tool because it also contained surface markers of emotional connectedness in its references to the American educational system, yet it still centered on individual practices:

I read from the Delgado-Gaitan article, on page 229, the first paragraph: “The manner in which parents relate to school becomes a cultural issue, not so much because different cultural groups interact differently with the schools but because the process of engaging with the educational system is bound by rules, language, and values that privilege some people and exclude others.” So I thought this was a really important commentary on how the American education system, um you know, can do, um a lot better job of um being cross-cultural, rather than um American centralized, because we’ve got such a wide variety of cultures in America that um, it’s difficult for parents to be engaged, as it discusses later on ... I recall um, freshman year I was in the [elementary] school doing an observation and I was walking down the halls and they had a teacher who spoke Vietnamese translating a meeting for a parent who was discussing an IEP plan with her um son and the principal, and some other professor, and uh, that was really helpful, um, because you need to include the parents in the educational process so, to be able to include them is really important.

This narrative engaged with the system’s lack of cross-culturalism, remarking on an experience that presented a possible solution to this issue. However, we again perceived a sense of distancing from situating this problem within a deeper underlying issue of linguistic and cultural oppression in schools, as well as the limited ways in which English speakers can truly understand the experiences of multilingual students and families navigating an English-privileging system.

REFLECTIONS ON EMOTIONAL CONNECTEDNESS IN DISCOURSE

We have kept in mind throughout this work the importance of using critical feminist theories to guide our pedagogy in the classroom, namely disrupting the highly intellectualized academic space, encouraging students to bring their emotional selves into their work, and grappling with the racial and gendered implications of knowledge construction in classrooms. Our data analysis was guided by our essential questions: how might we recognize emotional connectedness and what lessons can we draw about how to cultivate it in our practice as teachers? Examining the discourse that occurred in each vignette has deepened our understanding of emotional connectedness as a theory that can be identified as a series of dialogic markers that help us to better understand how to recognize and cultivate emotional connectedness in classroom dialogue. In both vignettes we recognized in the two main narratives (MN1 and MN2) three significant dialogic markers that aligned with our grounded theory of emotional connectedness in discourse: (1) a sense of situatedness, that is, the understanding that the speaker was a part of a system whose structures and norms impacted that speaker's lived reality; (2) an acknowledgment of the limitations of those lived realities and knowledges, particularly related to Whiteness; and (3) an embodied reaction that acknowledged not just an intellectual response, but an emotional and physical one that came with a sense of urgency, recognizing that the status quo and their role as teachers in the existing system would actively harm people of color until they could learn how to dismantle it. While we have recognized that several of the adjacent narratives contained versions of one of these three characteristics, it was the presence of all three markers interacting within a given narrative that led us to recognize emotional connectedness. We believe it was the intersecting presence of all three that brought MN1 and MN2 into a deeper emotionally connected space.

In both main narratives we were struck by the sense of urgency. The first main narrative (MN1) grappled with the paradox of feeling a strong commitment to dismantling the prevalence of a Eurocentric curriculum and yet had no time to learn how to do so. We also saw an embodied vulnerability in being able to express insecurity such as worry and nervousness. This urgency and embodied emotionality signaled to us that this narrative was not approaching the issue of curricula with a sense of intellectual curiosity, but from a vulnerable space of care and concern for students who are harmed by the educational system. Likewise, the second main narrative (MN2) used urgent and embodied language, particularly phrases like "reading this is ... like a slap in the face" and acknowledging the need to "wake up" and "understand better." Both of these narratives implied the deep vulnerability and reflexivity of understanding that the norms they had lived by are not only not neutral, but actually harmful. Both of these narratives also explicitly addressed their own lack of experience outside of their socializations through a school system that upheld Whiteness and Eurocentricity, with MN1 asking how to dismantle Eurocentricity when "that's all that I know," and MN2 acknowledging "as a White women ... I still have so much to learn."

As we frame our analysis in critical feminist theories, we see manifestations of emotionality being made public on a multidimensional level, not only through knowing, but through feeling. As Audre Lorde (1984) wrote, feeling inhabits a deeper sense of knowing: "I had to know I knew it first ... I had to feel" (p. 109). In the case of MN1, we see the responses to this feeling—a knowing as a gentle but effective silencing of that invitation to enter into a collective emotional space. We would argue that this type of silencing that comes from niceness and supportiveness is even more common than firm censuring, or blatant shaming of public emotion. The silencer tells us that our fears or worries are unfounded, that we are needlessly complicating something that has a simple, rational solution, invalidating emo-

tionality through comfort. This process reinforces the norm that emotions should be private and unseen (Boler, 1999) and have no place in an intellectual space like a classroom. In the same way that this silencing plays out in educator spaces, it is replicated in classrooms, where students of color are made to feel that the micro and macro aggressions they experience are invented, or blown out of proportion. The silencing of emotions translates into real harm to the very people that teachers want to support.

EMERGING LESSONS FOR OUR TEACHING PRACTICE

An important reason that compelled us to take a deep look at these two particular pieces of emotionally connected discourse and the adjacent narratives or responses is because they were rare in our course. Most contributions from students represented to us evidence of engagement, effort, and important intellectual grappling, which made for many rich discussions over the semester. However the vast majority of these narratives contained very few markers of emotional connectedness. As we continued to grapple with these data and form theories on emotional connectedness and intellectualization, we came to think more deeply about the many years of messages and socialization that students receive in their schooling years leading up to university about what is expected of them in institutional learning spaces. As instructors, and as women who have also been socialized out of our emotionality, we have unintentionally replicated those structures by letting much of this emotional work be implicit and therefore largely invisible. Through this work, we realized it was not enough to simply assign good texts and open up space for discussion. We had to work more actively to bring wholeness back into the classroom, including working to put back together our own splits as well.

The need for us to shift our teaching practices in more tangible ways has been continu-

ally confirmed to us by students in subsequent classes. While our “official” practice of data collection for this particular course was completed after the spring semester of 2018, we continue putting into practice our deeply held value of collaborative and reflexive grappling with our teaching practices, using student voice to guide us in reflecting on the learning spaces we are cultivating. Thus, it was not wholly surprising that as we grappled with the issues of this work, a student from a new class Nastasia is currently teaching gave us a window of insight into the complexity we were grappling with, as students often do. In reacting to a chapter from Lisa Delpit’s (2012) book *Multiplication Is for White People*, a student brought up a tension he was feeling in how he could, or should, react to a particularly troubling passage that listed overtly racist quotes from American figureheads such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. When he was asked to unpack the tension he was feeling, he described feeling that he housed two reactions: a “human” reaction, and a “student” reaction. The *human reaction* contained outrage, which he expressed as “this is bullshit.” The *student reaction* contained a sense of obligatory analysis; the feeling that it was expected of him to say something “smart” in reaction to the text. In another class session, a student reacted to watching Anna Devereare Smith’s (2015) *Notes from the Field*, saying that she felt tears come to her eyes during several parts of the film. She followed up by saying that had she been in her own room rather than a classroom, she would have openly cried.

These students’ articulations make sense within the context of our theory of emotional connectedness within institutional learning spaces, and further align with our grappling with how to cultivate classrooms that encourage and protect human wholeness. Their descriptions of the tension that they face in classroom spaces particularly around texts that might naturally elicit outrage, grief, guilt, confusion, or sadness, helped to ground what we instinctively know: that students are whole, complex, diverse human beings, with the depth

and ability to be emotionally connected. However, they astutely pick up on the many years of messaging from academic and other spaces, that emotions are meant to be experienced individually and privately, that they are the antithesis of *reason* and *rationality* and that displaying such emotion might be perceived as a lack of intellectual acuity (Boler, 1999). Through this lens, we can see that the two emotionally connected narratives (MN1 and MN2) directly contrasted these norms. An underlying aspect of both of these narratives was the stance of *not knowing*, but rather feeling. Both emotionally connected narratives offered little analysis, or connection to an individual personal experience, but instead delved deeply into their awareness of what they *didn't* know, in both cases pointing both to the limitations of their identity-dependent socializations, and that they felt an urgency to move beyond the limitations of their own experiences. In both of these cases, rather than leaving us with a sense that they indicated confusion, or lack of intellectual understanding, the emotionally connected narratives indicated deep and powerful awareness of a larger collective context in which students' learning was situated. However, in both of these vignettes, we are left with the question: *was emotional connectedness realized?* We cannot say with conviction that we were successful in cultivating an emotionally connected space in either context, since each emotionally connective narrative was bookended with more intellectualizing narratives or responses. In both of these cases, pre-service teachers took it upon themselves to grapple in an emotionally connected way with texts. While this may be a result of the specific texts that we chose, hoping to elicit this kind of grappling, we noticed that each narrative was fleeting, returning quickly to more traditional classroom discourse.

As educators ourselves, we resonate with the sense of urgency that was articulated by our student who worried about her impact while she unlearned her Eurocentric socialization. As we analyzed our data we moved between spaces of inspiration, deep apprecia-

tion for our students, as well as a regretful sense of "missed opportunities" as facilitators of these discussions. We wondered about our role in the dialogues featured in the both vignettes: had we intervened in a more intentional and transparent way, would we have been able to cultivate more emotionally connected narratives? In particular, the student who shared the main narrative in Vignette 1 shared with us later that the responses to her concern made her feel invalidated in sharing her worry. Had we responded to the narrative in Vignette 1 by encouraging any students responding to consider doing so in a more emotionally connected way, perhaps we could have prevented the harm that happened to the original speaker in that dialogue. Creating space for students to consider their wholeness and to practice vulnerability and reflexivity might have helped to encourage a more emotionally connected dialogue, ultimately making some progress around how to develop a teaching practice that rejects Eurocentricity and White supremacy endemic in standard curricula.

The data in this work has confirmed our commitment to both practicing and cultivating emotional connectedness in our teaching and we continue to grapple with how to recognize and cultivate it. We have become more intentional about aligning our pedagogies with critical feminist theories by modeling our own vulnerabilities and humanities as they relate to our teaching. One way we do this is to be transparent about our own learning, particularly the ways in which readings and theories have challenged our own knowledges. We take time from class to recognize our humanity by doing "check ins" and welcoming each student by name. This practice was difficult to establish, as we worried about taking time away from academic content. It has also proven to be one of the most impactful classroom practices, cultivating deep trust and community among students, leading to rich and emotionally connected discussions. We also now explain students to our goals of deprioritizing polished intellectual responses, explicitly asking for

“half-baked” ideas and “shitty first drafts,” rather than planned narratives.

While some of these practices are not new to our teaching, the practice of naming them comes directly from this research. We recognize that there is an extent to which teaching is theater—we are hesitant to pull back the curtain and reveal to students the mechanisms behind the magic of epiphany that we attempt to manufacture in our classrooms. Transparency threatens to ruin that magic, bringing students into the weeds of pedagogical decision making. Indeed, engaging in transparent pedagogies has led to us modeling our own vulnerabilities, as we are compelled through this practice to be honest about our own risk-taking in class as well as the ways in which we still grapple with the complexities and tensions of building antiracist teaching practices ourselves. We have found that rather than dulling the shine, naming our intentions and vulnerabilities has been invitational for students. They often take up the vocabulary (“okay, this is a half-baked idea, but ...”) with enthusiasm. Rather than taking the magic and mystery out of learning, transparency and vulnerability has helped us build deeper relationality in the classroom, inviting students to engage in emotional connectedness themselves.

Grounded in our framework of critical feminist theories and antiracist pedagogies (e.g., Boler, 1999; Giroux, 2003; hooks, 1992, 1994, 2000; Okun, 2010; Paris, 2009; Royal, 2013; Zembylas, 2012) and illuminated by our data, we see that emotional connectedness is a public, communal interaction that prioritizes vulnerability, reflexivity, awareness of positionality and impact on others, and takes stock of intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual interaction with knowledge. As we have seen in our data, emotional connectedness is not simply *feelings*. Importantly, emotionally connected narratives did not display a sense of emotional fragility, but a sense of urgency to continue to learn and dismantle the damage of White, middle class socializations around knowledge and teaching. The narratives of our students have given us crucial les-

sons into how we ourselves need to approach classroom spaces, dismantling the privileging of our intellectual selves and creating spaces that bring our splits back together.

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NOTE

1. This term has replaced the common term “colorblindness,” which, in addition to representing an outdated and inadequate form of addressing race, is also ableist language.

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