

# Moving toward a Community of Resistance through Autobiographical Inquiry

## Creating Disruptive Spaces in a Multicultural Education Course

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### Introduction

I am from the South, yet I do not claim “Southern” in the string of identity markers I use to describe who I am. Well aware of the historical representation of Southern (White) womanhood around norms of politeness, acquiescence, and silence (Pinar, 2001), I resist such constructs in my teaching in order to create opportunities for my students to dialogue with each other, with themselves, and with me as we study texts in the field of multicultural education in an effort toward deeper critical construction of our teaching identities.

While the context of the South looms ever present in the shaping of my personal and professional identities, “Southern”—especially the ideal of the Southern (White) lady—signals a set of norms not in keeping with who I am. As a Black woman teacher educator who is committed to education as a practice of freedom (hooks, 1994) in a predominantly White institution in the South, I am reminded often through open resistance by my students in class and in anonymous course evaluations that they prefer a teacher who agrees with everything they say and does not challenge them to question their long-held beliefs, who chooses to avoid difficult conversations about race, gender, language, and class difference and does not highlight how privilege and power work to maintain inequity in public schools. I am not the mammy figure they need in a teacher educator, someone whose pedagogy is non-threatening and allows them to hold on to their unexamined assumptions no matter how problematic they might be for their future students.

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While I do not mean to suggest that the South is monolithic, I do maintain that the legacy of enslavement has played a significant role in shaping a collective identity of the South where absences, distortions, and anger around issues of race, sex, gender, and religion still permeate (Pinar, 1993). When teacher educators are situated in the South, especially the Deep South, and they work in multicultural teacher preparation, they often write about the proverbial White pre-service teacher who is almost always admittedly Christian in a family who is still openly racist and homophobic from small rural locales with limited diversity (Asher, 2003, 2005, 2007; Pinar, 1993; Wang & Yu, 2006).

For example, Pinar (1993) writes about the “enormous curricular and cultural task” of confronting the “defensiveness regarding race, including the denial of guilt and responsibility for enslavement and consequent segregation, prejudice, and violence” in an effort to move toward “political, critical, and informed analyses of race and class in the South” (pp. 64-66).

Asher (2005) writes that as her students’ begin seeing how their own lives are connected to difference, their “shift in consciousness” results in “confusion/conflict within, making them rethink their own histories and future work as teachers” (p. 1093). In a later article, Asher (2007) questions how much “real” progress teacher educators are making toward social transformation when “outings” of any kind that are not in keeping with dominant social identity norms (of gender, sexuality, religion, or race) are “rare” at best (pp. 70-71).

Wang and Yu (2006) reflect on their teacher education students’ resistance to discussions of power and privilege, particularly their initial resistance to “seeing privilege in their own lives,” and the “unsettling” effects this resistance had on Wang’s and Yu’s own “national, gendered, social, and classed” teaching identities as

Chinese professors each working in universities in the U.S. (p. 31, 33).

### Creating Space

My pedagogical purpose is always to create a space in my multicultural education courses where students are able to expose and deconstruct their assumptions no matter how difficult it might be to move forward toward deeper understanding of themselves. I resist those models of multicultural teacher education that Banks (1991) calls “additive” or “contributions” approaches, opting instead for critical examinations of systemic power and privilege in U.S. public schooling. To create a pedagogical space that encourages critical interrogations of the self, I utilize Black feminist theory as an organizing framework, particularly bell hooks’ notions of “talking back,” (1989, p. 5) and “homeplace as a site of resistance” (1990, p. 42).

hooks contextualizes “talking back” in the Southern Black community and defines it as “speaking as an equal to an authority figure” and “daring to disagree,” and sometimes she says “it just meant having an opinion” (p. 5). She goes on to say that “talking back” took courage:

To make yourself heard if you were a girl child was to invite punishment, the backhand lick, the slap across the face that would catch you unaware, or the feel of switches stinging your arms and legs. To speak then when one was not spoken to was a courageous act—an act of risk and daring. (p. 5)

I invite my students to “talk back” to discourses in multicultural education with which they often resist, in particular those discourses that ask them to examine the privileging of Whiteness in the U.S. While hooks defines “talking back” within a Southern Black context, I extend its use as a pedagogical construct in my multicultural education courses for my mostly White Southern students. White male and

female students often come to my multicultural education courses unable (and sometimes unwilling) to name the ways in which gender and racial oppression and/or privilege have impacted their daily lives as well as the ways in which the image of the Southern lady has influenced the construction of their identities.

In the context of the South—past and present—in which the White Southern belle is beautiful in large part because she does not speak, either too much or too assertively, a pedagogical space in which talking back is encouraged is important in helping pre-service teachers re-think their taken-for-granted assumptions about issues of difference. Oftentimes, this process is difficult for my Southern White students because they are largely unaccustomed to pedagogical spaces where dissonance is encouraged. I have learned that denials, disagreements, and dissonance are sometimes necessary for my students and me to get to what hooks' terms "true speaking," which she defines as "an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless." "As such," hooks continues, "[true speaking] is a courageous act" (p. 8).

### Employing Autobiography

In addition to creating spaces for my students to talk back to others, I also am committed to creating opportunities for them to engage in critical interrogations of the self. In my multicultural education courses, autobiography is the most important tool in my pedagogical repertoire for helping students to understand the intersectionality of their identities (Crenshaw, 1993), examine how various intersections create varying degrees of privilege, and recognize how this privilege impacts their teacher identities.

I do not ask students to do autobiography for the sake of confession or exposure, but to problematize their own stories using newly studied multicultural educational theory and "investigate [their] multiple, intersecting, unpredictable and unassimilable identities" (Miller, 2005, p. 220). I invite them to explore through reflective journaling what Pinar (2004) calls their "biographic situation":

The student of educational experience takes as hypothesis that at any given moment she or he is a "biographic situation," that is to say, that she or he is located in historical time and cultural place, but in a singularly meaningful way, a situation to be expressed in one's

autobiographic voice. "Biographic situation" suggests a structure of lived meaning that follows from past situation, but which contains, contradictions of past and present as well as anticipation of possible futures. (p. 36)

Asher's research (2003, 2005, 2007) speaks to the potential of autobiography as a central component in multicultural teacher education pedagogy, especially if it is situated in the South. Working within a teacher education program at a predominantly White university in Louisiana, Asher structures autobiographical assignments so that her students may "foster a more complex awareness of their particular situatedness, as future multicultural teachers" (2005, p. 1089). She asks them to reflect on their experiences of difference at home with their families, in communities, and at school, and her analysis of these reflections reveals that students who initially perceive themselves as without a culture begin to recognize how their lives, and perhaps their future teaching, are connected to multiculturalism.

My purpose for creating opportunities for my students to talk back through autobiographical inquiry is so that we might construct a pedagogical space akin to hooks' notion of "homeplace as a site of resistance," (1990, p. 42) where she says "one is able to redeem and reclaim the past, legacies of pain, suffering, and triumph in ways that transform present reality," where "fragments of memory are not simply represented as flat documentary but constructed to give a 'new take' on the old" (p. 147).

My aim is for students to deconstruct the familiar—their histories, their assumptions, their experiences in the South—through autobiographical inquiry to move toward deeper understandings of who they are and who they want to become as teachers. When they are able to do so, as the results of my study suggests, they are able to move toward developing an oppositional teacher identity in a Southern context rooted in challenging inequity in public schools.

### Reflecting on Themselves

The purpose of this article is to show how pre-service teachers utilized autobiographical inquiry in a multicultural education course to reflect on what they learned about themselves and the teaching of culturally and linguistically diverse students while they served as tutors for English Learners (ELs) in a

semester-long field experience in public schools in metropolitan Atlanta. Preceding this study is a body of literature by curriculum theorists that has focused on how pre-service teachers in multicultural education courses are changed (or not) as a result of course readings, discussions, and critical autobiographical reflection, all of which happen within the confines of the university classroom (Asher, 2003, 2005, 2007; Wang & Yu, 2006; Wang, 2009). Not enough research exists in the field of curriculum studies in which pre-service teachers are asked to study their own history of self-other relationships as they compare to, and have an impact on, their experiences of self-other relationships in real school settings.

In this article, I answer the call of scholars in the field of multicultural teacher education who suggest that more opportunities need to be created for pre-service teachers to think about and interact with real students in real schools (Darling-Hammond & Bransford 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2001). In my extension of curriculum theorists' work on autobiography (Asher, 2003, 2005, 2007; Miller, 2005; Pinar, 2004; Wang, 2009), I draw on hooks' notion of "talking back" (1989) and "homeplace as a site of resistance" (1990) as frameworks in analyzing the autobiographical reflections of my pre-service teachers.

In the first part of the article, I describe the context for and participants in the study. Next, I explain my methods for data collection and analysis. In the analysis that follows, I examine how my pre-service teachers use autobiography to talk back to multicultural educational theory to represent understandings of themselves as future teachers in relation to students with whom they have very little in common. After the analysis, I end with a discussion of the significance of my study for curriculum theorists who use autobiography in multicultural teacher preparation.

### A Changing Southern Context

I work in a teacher education program at a university located in northwest Georgia. Founded as a junior college in 1963, the institution has grown rapidly to become one of the largest universities in Georgia with more than 24,000 undergraduate and graduate students representing 142 countries. The university's college of education is among the state's largest producer of teachers. Even though the university

campus is large, the city in which it is located cannot be considered a typical college town.

Named a top ten “Best Towns for Families” in 2007 by Family Circle magazine, the university’s home town is a staunchly conservative suburb of Atlanta. It is home to a Civil War landmark that celebrates one of the few victories for Confederates during the Atlanta Campaign of the Civil War and the famous ordinance of 1982 still in existence that requires every head of household to maintain a firearm along with ammunition.<sup>1</sup> The town is located in the county of the home base of former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, the place where the only known lynching of a Jewish man in the U.S. took place in 1915, and home to the school district that placed “evolution is a theory, not a fact” stickers in biology textbooks in 2005, a practice which was challenged in the famous *Selman* Supreme Court case.

The county’s school district, one of the state’s largest school districts educating more than 107,000 students, is where most of the university’s pre-service teachers are placed for their field experiences. In recent years, this area has undergone significant demographic shifts in its population of culturally and linguistically diverse students, which is also reflective of statewide increases in diversity (County School District, 2010). In 2008, the most recent year’s data posted by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition indicates that English Learners (ELs) totaled 72,613 in Georgia’s public schools—a growth rate that represents an increase of 406.41% since 1997. In 2009-2010, the year of my study, the school district in which my pre-service teachers were placed for their field experience served 8700+ ELs (National Clearinghouse for the Office of English Language Acquisition, 2012).

Against this backdrop of increasing diversity in Georgia’s public schools and in keeping with national trends, the university’s teacher education majors are mostly White women. In 2009, the year of my study, 85% of 1450 total teacher education majors were women, 87% of them were White, and 99% were Georgia natives. In fact, only nine teacher education majors were from states outside of the South, and only three were international students.

The multicultural education course I teach is required of all teacher education majors, so my class makeup matches this profile. Many of my students are from towns in Georgia farther north than the university, and they often report that the

university represents the most diversity they have ever encountered.

### Data Sources and Methods of Analysis

Before I collected any data, I secured permission to conduct my study through the university’s Institutional Review Board, and then I obtained informed consent from students enrolled in four sections of my spring and fall 2009 sophomore level multicultural education course entitled “Exploring Sociocultural Perspectives on Diversity in Educational Contexts,” a course required of all teacher education majors in the University System of Georgia.

In the informed consent, I explained to students the purpose of the research: to examine pre-service teachers’ reflections about what they learned about themselves and the teaching of English learners as a result of their semester-long field experience in K-12 schools. I also told students that their choice to participate or not would in no way impact their grades in the course, and if they chose to participate, their identity would be kept confidential and they could withdraw their participation at any time.

Participants were asked to write a series of field experience reflections in which they examined their experiences tutoring culturally and linguistic diverse students, and they were then asked to synthesize what they learned about themselves and culturally and linguistically diverse students into a multicultural teaching philosophy. Participants voluntarily submitted these multiple forms of evidence—field experience reflections and philosophy statements—as narrative data for analysis.

I analyzed narrative data from 63 total participants. Of the 63 participants, 57 were women and six were men. Forty-six participants were under the age of 25, 13 were between the ages of 25 and 35, and five were over the age of 35. All participants were White, except for two: one an African-American woman and the other a Haitian man. All participants, except for two, reported that they were from Georgia. These two self-identified as English learners; one’s first language was Creole, and the other’s was French. No participants withdrew their informed consent.

I began analysis of participant data by reading through my students’ field experience reflections to determine themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Emerging from this set of data were categories related to the “other,” specifically

how my students perceived ELs, and categories related to the “self,” specifically my students’ views of themselves during the time they spent with ELs. For example, I coded words for negative stereotypical representations of ELs, which included “illegal,” “unmotivated to learn,” “slow,” and “hard to understand.” My students’ descriptions of themselves included their concerns about “offending,” “losing patience,” and “not being understood,” so I coded these descriptions into a category centering on students’ fears of culturally and linguistically different others.

I finished analysis of participant data by reading through my students’ philosophies for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. This set of data showed more complexity as my students wrestled with synthesizing their history of experiences with culturally and linguistically different “others” and their experiences in schools working one-on-one with ELs to develop a multicultural teaching philosophy. In this set of data, students were self-reflexive about the impact of their own assumptions and stereotypes on interactions with ELs, and they considered the impact of the field experience on their personal identity as well as their teacher identity.

I coded words for the theme of transformation, such as “changed” and “different” because many of my students reflected on how they became “better people” and will become “better teachers” as a result of the field experience. In my students’ reflections about what they learned about teaching of ELs, many wrote about the importance of various contextual factors; I coded words like “home,” “school,” and “culture” and grouped these reflections into a category labeled the “sociopolitical context of multicultural education” (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

After the coding of data, I then analyzed ways in which my students use autobiography to reflect on the aforementioned themes and their connection to larger discourses in multicultural education. In their reflections, my students utilize autobiographical inquiry to rethink their taken-for-granted assumptions as a result of intercultural interactions in a real school context and reconstruct their teaching identities as a result; in addition, they begin to frame their multicultural teaching philosophies in a sociopolitical context (Nieto & Bode, 2008). I explore each of these subthemes below.

## Deconstructing Assumptions, Evolving Teaching Identities

About 75% of my students use autobiography to reflect on their changed attitudes because of the time they spent getting to know ELs and working with them one-on-one in their classrooms. In pre-field reflections, many students use stereotypical descriptions for others who were culturally and linguistically different without any explicit deconstruction of the stereotypes they used. In post-field reflections, 15 students explicitly reflect on how intercultural interactions in the semester-long field experience with ELs caused them to “see” what assumptions they had about culturally and linguistically different others. In their autobiographies, they are able to name the assumption and challenge its authenticity based on real-life connections they were able to make during their field experience.

Even though my students’ new understandings about self-other relationships are certainly worth noting as change in a positive direction, especially considering the cultural milieu in which they live, their use of autobiography here, according to Miller (2005), tends toward “modernist forms of autobiographical inquiry” where a progression from ignorance to knowledge of self and other is marked in autobiographical reflection (p. 219). While my students discuss the need to further engage in critical reflection on the self in order to discover more of their own taken-for-granted assumptions so that they might be better able to build successful relationships with students, they do not generally utilize autobiography in ways that problematize their movement toward new understandings of their enlightened selves. Their autobiographical inquiry most often falls short of talking back to, that is, problematizing, Enlightenment discourses that privilege story-telling of a unitary self and story-telling forever in search of a happy ending.

Only two students utilize autobiography to reflect on a teaching self in ways that trouble notions of a static teaching identity. In the excerpts that follow, both students talk back to themselves in their reflections problematizing existing notions of their “previous” teacher selves, arriving at a point where they confront long-held stereotypes and the work they still must do on the self. Mary writes:

I learned that I had a lot more stereotypes and low expectations than I thought I did. Even though I never verbalized these

thoughts, I know that I will not be so quick to group [ELs] into a ‘slower’ category. My students were able to work faster and answer questions more correct [sic] than native speakers in my class. I am glad I learned that I was not as wonderful as I thought I was going to be. I think I need to have more experiences like this before I have a classroom of my own.

Mary confronts assumptions that surfaced during the course of the field experience. At the beginning of the semester, she did not think she had work to do on the self, but through autobiographical reflection she articulates that even her “wonderful” self is still a work in progress. Mary uses autobiography to wrestle with the tentativeness of identity in the present and the future as she identifies a need to for more experiences that will prompt further self-examination before she becomes a teacher.

Another student, Lori, begins to deconstruct her own White racial identity and culture in her autobiographical reflection. She writes:

I think I need to learn my strengths and weaknesses in all content areas. I say this because it seems like I’ve only been focused on English and Language. I also feel like I’m missing a part of my culture because I’ve only ever classified myself as Caucasian but I think learning more about my Irish and Cherokee backgrounds may help me relate better to my students.

In my history of working with White pre-service teachers in the South, very few realize that they have a culture even after several course readings and discussions about the invisibility and privileging of White racial identity in the U.S. (see also Asher, 2007). My students have been mostly resistant to unpacking their own identity and investigating how privilege may impact their future relationships with students. In her reflection, Lori uncovers the taken-for-granted-ness of her identity, specifically the “missing parts” that heretofore remained invisible to her, and recognizes the importance of complicating her identity as Cherokee and Irish, rather than reducing it. Lori uses autobiographical inquiry here to investigate her multiple, intersecting identities and the possibilities (and potential limitations) of these in her future relationships with students.

### Reconceptualizing Teaching Philosophies

I now turn my focus toward discussion of those moments in my pre-service teachers’ teaching philosophies where they

use autobiography to talk back to larger discourses of multicultural education and develop an oppositional teacher identity. I encourage pre-service teachers to talk back to—to question and problematize—multicultural education literature that is required reading in my multicultural education courses, and I hope that they will do so by taking ownership of whatever response they make to new and challenging ideas presented in the literature.

As a final writing assignment, I asked students to review their previous field experience reflections and synthesize them to articulate a philosophy of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners based on their autobiographical reflections, course readings and discussions, and their field experience in real school contexts. The reflections ranged in complexity of thinking, from superficial sound bites from multicultural education literature they picked up from course readings and class discussions to more substantive thinking about their teaching in a sociopolitical context (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

The examples of students reproducing a kind of superficial sound-bite approach to articulating their teaching philosophies feature frequent “sampling” of ideas without any evidence of engagement with those ideas. For example, students cite buzz words from the literature like “equity” and “equality” as they discuss what kind of schooling environment they envision but do not demonstrate an understanding of the difference between the two concepts; they declare themselves “advocates for” and “positive influences on” their students without any acknowledgement that students are agents themselves; and they express the need to avoid “food and festival approaches” to teaching yet show no real understanding of any other approach to multicultural education that we studied in the course (Banks, 1991, 1996).

A few students do show more complexity in their articulations of a philosophy for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. In her final autobiographical reflections, Brooke connects her own history of struggle in English classes with the success she experienced in the field experience. She writes:

Looking back at my pre-field experience reflection, I noticed that I sound scared just through my words. I am a lot more confident coming out of this experience... I said in the beginning that I expected to mess up, which I’m sure I did a couple of times that I was teaching. However, I must have done some things right because

the students really started grasping the concepts that we were learning. I'm glad that I struggled with English in school, because that made teaching a lot easier for me. I was able to understand their struggles, and know exactly where they were coming from when they were confused. I think that my struggles as an English student made it easier for me to feel comfortable.

Brooke's reflection shows her engagement with multicultural education literature on empathy as she connects successful teaching with being empathetic. Brooke utilizes autobiography to join the conversation in the extant literature on empathy, a quality many multicultural educators say is necessary for teachers to develop so that points of view and perspectives which may be outside of the norm will be respected as legitimate (Banks, 1996; Banks et al., 2001).

The most complex articulations of teaching philosophies were those where students' autobiographical reflections were framed within the larger sociopolitical context of schools, which Nieto and Bode (2008) say is necessary to understand if teachers are to develop a critical view of multicultural education (p. 7). Ellen joins others within the field of multicultural education who theorize about the connections between identity and language and the influence of home culture on school culture (Nieto, 2001). She writes:

Before my field experience, I thought that English learners were eager to learn English, which is indeed true. But English learners also still have strong connections to their first language and home culture and are just as eager to share it with others. Through interacting with these students, I have learned that I do not have all the answers simply because I know English better.

Ellen reflects on an important lesson about language and identity. The students in her field experience classroom represent a real-life example of additive bilingualism, which Nieto and Bode (2008) say is a counterargument to the false assumption that students must forget their native language to learn English. Ellen recognizes how intelligent students are even if they may not be totally proficient in standard American English, a distinction that even experienced teachers sometimes cannot make.

Later, Ellen reveals how much more she has to learn, not only about content and pedagogy but also about herself, a valuable lesson for all teachers and especially for those teachers who do not share the cultural and linguistic backgrounds

of their students. Ellen utilizes autobiographical inquiry to construct a teaching identity that is not yet finished, without all the answers, willing to learn more about herself and her students.

Kara, whose field experience included time in a regular education classroom setting with an ELL as well as time in that same student's ESOL classroom, locates "flaws" in the education provided to ELs. In so doing, Kara uses autobiography to talk back to discourses on the systemic inequality of U.S. public schooling. She writes:

After spending over a semester with these students I did notice some very obvious flaws in the ESOL program. The students I worked with seemed to be targeted as having lower intellect and being a disruption to class. But I really think that Helena and Herman are two very smart kids who just needed some outside motivation...I am still a little confused about how I feel about ESOL. I think that it is a wonderful program and the students really need the extra help, but I also witnessed firsthand the students being labeled for being in the program. This seems to be the impression that everyone has of the program yet no one is willing to take time to reform it. It's really frustrating to watch these kids get, very subtly, pushed to the side for something that is not even a problem or their fault at all...I think that schools should work a lot harder on not putting such a negative connotation on ESOL students and actually pushing the students to do well.

In this reflection, Kara argues against—talks back to—deficit model discourses (see, for example, Payne, 2005) that label the students unintelligent; Kara situates the problems ELs are having as a systemic failure of schools to maintain high expectations for all learners. She worries about education for ELs that is not equitable and fears that they are being pushed to the side rather than be helped to succeed. Finally, she makes an implicit call for all of us to "reform" a school system so that ELs can do well.

### **Moving Toward a Community of Resistance through Autobiographical Inquiry**

As a teacher educator who has shaped her entire professional career around helping pre-service teachers to engage in critical, self-reflexive multiculturalism, mostly through the pedagogy of autobiographical inquiry, I still have questions about the impact of such work on future teachers: How successful am I in fostering the kind

of "communities of resistance" that hooks (1990) says will help dismantle systemic gender, race, class, language, and religious oppression? Is a community of resistance that hooks describes even possible in a context where too many pre-service teachers are stuck in a South where anger, denial, and misrepresentations about race, gender, class, sexuality, and religious difference still linger?

Having taught multicultural education courses now for over 10 years with far too many students who are still unwilling to recognize the effects of privilege in their own lives and on the institution of schooling, I have had to re-consider my own pedagogical goals. In my early years, I thought that my students had to disavow all of their old ways of (Southern) thinking in order to construct a teaching identity for themselves where they would feel comfortable resisting pedagogical practices and educational policies aimed at maintaining inequity in public schools. I was stuck in binary as well as deficit model thinking back then—my students were ignorant and needed to be enlightened, and I defined my pedagogical role in terms of strategies toward that end. I now understand my role very differently as well as my students' construction of their teacher identities in more complicated ways.

I no longer hope to change my students by the end of each semester of our learning together. Instead, I focus my attention on choosing readings with which pre-service teachers can identify and that simultaneously challenge their assumptions, placing pre-service teachers in schools unlike the ones they attended, and asking pre-service teachers to use autobiography inquiry to be self-reflexive about their histories of self-other relationships and the influence of these on their constructions of themselves as teachers. This is the work that has become most important in my efforts to help pre-service teachers on their journeys toward understanding how their own histories and identities will impact their interactions with future students and that I hope will become more widespread in the field of multicultural teacher preparation.

I invite other teacher educators to utilize autobiographical inquiry—not to be confused with autobiography for the purpose of confessing, of telling one's story without ever problematizing previously held assumptions—in ways that help pre-service teachers "give a new take on the old," that hooks (1990) suggests is necessary in "making home a community of resistance" (p. 42). I have had much more

success creating communities of resistance at home in the South when I place preservice teachers in public schools unlike the ones they attended and ask them to examine their histories, their assumptions, and their experiences in the South as they consider who they are in relation to others and who they want to become as teachers.

When they are able to do so, as the results of my study suggests, they are able to move toward developing an oppositional teacher identity rooted in a Southern context better prepared to challenge inequity in public schools.

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