



education review
a journal of book reviews

Volume 12 Number 13
2009

September 22,

Gresson's *Race and Education*: An Essay Review

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Gresson III, Aaron David (2009). *Race and Education*. NY: Peter Lang.

Pp. 208 ISBN 978-0820488035

Citation: Malewski, Erik. (2009, September 22). Gresson's *Race and Education*: An essay review. *Education Review*, 12(13). Retrieved [date] from <http://edrev.asu.edu/essays/v12n13index.html>.

Teaching a course on multiculturalism? Race issues? U.S. history? Want to explore various perspectives on race, social justice, and education? If so, you will want to get yourself Gresson's *Race and Education Primer*. Different from other introductory texts, Gresson focuses on revealing for the reader the rationales that underwrite debates over race, positioning concepts historically within a U.S. and a global context, and drawing linkages to broader pursuits of social justice. Are you a teacher? Struggling with how to teach race and ethnicity in your class? This text will help you complicate your students' notions of race (as well as your own) without falling prey to either relativism or orthodoxy. Since the 1960s race studies have emerged as a prominent strand within multicultural education, even as thinkers, such as W. E. B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey were offering critical discussions of race, racism, and education over 100 years ago. At one point a *radical* idea in the academy, it has become *convention* within colleges and schools of education to note the role of race within education and its implications for teaching and learning. For example, over the past

decade there has been a plethora of research studies on culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Klug, 2003), understudied racial histories (Brandon, 2009; Winfield, 2009), raced and gendered nature of violence in the US (Pinar, 2001), Black identity as curricular construction (Taliaferro-Baszile, 2009), whiteness studies (Leonardo, 2002; Doane & Silva, 2003), poverty and privilege (Fierros, 2009), racial representation (Scheurich & Young, 1997), race and desire (Stoler, 1995), educational biographies (Johnson, 2000), and legal (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006) and post-colonial perspectives (Simpson, 2001).

As the reader can see, systematic explorations of the relationship between race and education are nothing new. Indeed, in 2009 the journal *Race, Ethnicity and Education* published a special issue devoted to the theme “Black Feminisms and Postcolonial Paradigms: Researching Educational Inequalities,” edited by Heidi Safia Mirza and Cynthia Joseph, and with articles by Suki Ali, Khalwant Bhopal, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Ann Phoenix. This collection of essays, with topics that range from Asian women and identity to decolonizing practices, only serves to illustrate how complex and multifaceted race studies in education have become. Enter Gresson’s *Race and Education Primer*, which retains the eclectic and nuanced character of contemporary race studies in education while concomitantly making these complicated ideas and theories accessible to newcomers. The reader might think of it as an introductory book for new times.

While this primer explores how race has been taken up within various educational domains, from critical discourse studies to critical pedagogy, the theme that marks this text is that race is not merely a peripheral or “add on” component of knowledge production, or an issue of mere biological difference. Rather, the text illustrates just how central race is to meaning making in education, and therefore the knowledge that humans consider important enough to pass on to the next generation.

About the Author

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Gresson teaches us race, as a signifier, is not set in stone; it is a “floating signifier” made and remade in various contexts throughout time and space (see Hall, 1997). Accordingly chapters offer different perspectives on attempts to understand race and efforts toward equality, the assumptions and rationalities that underwrite those efforts, and concordant criticism and praise. Readers learn early on that Gresson is not afraid to investigate counterarguments toward various bodies of thought on race and education, such as the notion that some view anti-racist education as indoctrination and anti-democratic (p. 108). In so doing, Gresson constructs race as a contested symbolic and material site, one that is made and remade through both discursive and non-discursive practices.

In much of the extant literature on race and education, whether the primary focus is legal, historical, pedagogical, cultural, or material, we unfortunately find salvation narratives and “one best way” approaches to issues of race, education, and justice that negate its cyclical, complicated, and insidious character. Gresson takes a different position. He focuses less on right strategies and more on controversies and disjunctures that lead the reader less toward the truth of race than the “stuck places” where we must produce and learn out of breakdowns and incapacities to understand race, at least in any complete and final way. He accounts for theories of reproduction and resistance and re-representation and re-distribution, as well as other key concepts in race and education studies. Yet, he also alludes to the as-yet unknown, particularly what globalization has done and might do to change the nature of the debates: “The topic of ‘race and education’ comes full circle with the emerging emphasis on the relation of global developments to race and education” (p. 134). In an era characterized by the “rage for accountability,” Gresson avoids superficial descriptions of the “[Insert Racial Group Here] Experience,” ones that are intended to efficiently prepare educators to teach in diverse settings without asking them to struggle with issues of mis-education, complicity, and just how problematic the relationship between race and education remains in contemporary times. Similarly, he avoids the temptation to move into “race competences” that function out of a checklist mentality and mask the complexity and indeterminability of the issues at hand in contemporary schooling. Instead, what Gresson tries to teach readers by way of an introductory text is that race is complex because it is understood situationally, through bodies and minds that are always already raced, classed, gendered, and sexed. Readers come to understand that it is through various “subject positions,” combined with one’s own agency and outlooks, that diverse and often discordant meaning is made of race and education.

Unfortunately, given the state of teacher education in particular and public education in general, there remains a vital need for an introductory text that covers all the terms and concepts that have developed at the crossroads of race and schooling. Most undergraduates are not going to get this type of critical race education in high

school. Within contemporary teacher education programs and in public schools, concepts and movements that include the Black Power Movement, race suicide, critical race theory, queer theory, Universal Truth, and culture wars are often presented as secondary to the “real work” of schooling. Therefore, Gresson is certain to provide a glossary of terms at the end of each chapter, along with helpful definitions conveniently located in the margins next to a new word or phrase. Sadly, this is necessary. Gresson is smart to assume that many readers have not confronted these issues, terms, and concepts before. In fact, to his credit he anticipates some resistance and incorporates the ideas and concerns of apprehensive readers in the storyline itself. Adding to the richness of the text, theories and ideas are juxtaposed with “real life” stories of how race impacted his life as an African American male; narratives that are interspersed throughout help readers see clearly the relationship between theory and practice.

Sparing the reader yet another text that promises prepackaged, fool-proof frameworks for teaching either a) majority students about the margins or b) students who are on the margins, the combination of definitions and narratives about actual teaching experiences with numerous perspectives on race is refreshing because it presents a complicated picture. In fact, in what seems like a paradox, the text maintains a level of complexity and accessibility that is rare not only in an introductory text like this one, but in any text attempting to address the difficult and problematic terrain of race studies. Readers are first introduced to multiple lenses that have been used to analyze race. Then, Gresson turns to a discussion of the origins of racial differences specific to the U.S. Once he provides this foundation, he explains how the “education gap” has been conceptualized, how race has been studied, and the ways race impacts teaching. Definitely a sign of the times, he ends the book with an exploration of “hybridity” and global perspectives. Chapter by chapter, Gresson introduces terms and phrases and then builds upon them, providing the reader with a context for deepening their understanding of key theories and the struggle for racial equality. By the end of the book, the reader has a foundation in events of the past and ideas such as “preferential privilege” and the “Civil Rights Act of 1964,” ones that have shaped how race is conceptualized in contemporary times. If the reader is open to it, the atheoretical and ahistorical nature of our national consciousness on race is challenged, if not discomposed, by his work. By the way, some important ideas include Scientific Racism, Positivism, Washington-DuBois Debate, Bilingual Education, The American Dream, Urban Pedagogy, Identity Shifting, and Semiotics.

Ironically, while the critique Gresson advances (that knowledge and therefore education cannot be separated from issues of race) is centuries old, this primer acts as a counter-force to the all too common assumption in educational research and practice that it is possible to assess individuals on merit divorced from race; decades after the

civil rights movement it remains a troubling idea for many of my colleagues that we must, over and over again, contend with the messiness of race, class, gender, sex, and so on when thinking through questions of ontology and epistemology in education. The recent controversy surrounding the confirmation hearings of Sonya Sotomayor and the shock at her revelation that race, ethnicity, and lived experience shape her outlook only proves my point. We are what we know. And what we know is shaped by race. Yet, too often inside our schools, when it comes to subjects such as US and world history, psychology, literature, biology, and so on, race is often treated as a topic that can be teased out on the way toward producing our most coveted truths. That is, it is still acceptable to focus on discussions of “humanity,” putting to memory “bodily organs,” understanding “developmental cognition,” analyzing “plot development,” and so on, and still fail to recognize the centrality of race to the contours of the knowledge and ideas thought important enough to teach. Rarely do educators contend with how race is a curricular construction. Or, to say it another way, how what is deemed worthy knowledge shapes what gets thought of when one thinks of race and how this knowledge in turn enables and constrains our understanding of the racial dimensions of the concepts we as educators hold most dear.

These false dichotomies perpetuate grand illusions within curriculum and mask the troubling origins of some of education’s most taken-for-granted practices, such as the genesis of today’s testing craze within the eugenics movement (see Winfield, 2007). Similarly, prevailing mainstream discourse all too often renders race an issue of “otherness,” of what is at issue for Latinos, Blacks, and Asian Pacific Islanders, each a stand alone entity, instead of exploring more important questions of *how race is given meaning in complex and sometimes conflicting ways*. The mainstream perspective focused on framing minority culture and issues stands in contrast to what Gresson seeks for his readers: a racialized consciousness that sees how the categories of self and other inform identity, culture, and knowledge-in-the-making. It is interesting that in this sense, Gresson is telling readers “we are who we are” is at least in part because of what “we are not.” His primer urges a move from a focus on “facts, names, dates, and issues” to race as a contested site, a social creation made and remade over and over again with significant symbolic and material consequences.

What does it mean when educators talk generically of “schools,” “teachers,” “students,” “subject content,” or “instructional practice”? What are the implications when the ways students are situated, and how they experience the world, by way of race, is overlooked? Gresson works in a counter-tradition where lived history and positionality give rise to multiple, divergent, and sometimes conflicting meanings that come to signify race. Rather than attach race invariably to a particular worldview, Gresson is interested in how race exists differently within an intricate web of self-understanding and symbolic and material conditions. What Gresson’s work allows for

is an inter-textual reading of race and education, one that explores the relationship between what is visible along racial lines (skin, bone, style of dress, hair, and so on) along with not-so-visible subjective meaning making practices related to actions and subjectivity (feelings, ideas, thoughts, emotions). Hence, he writes, “At the core of all the changes that have taken place within the realm of race relations, identity is possibly the most challenging and critical to be mindful of” (p. 146). Cultural meanings, and “who one is” amongst them, change over time, place, and space.

Through this counter-tradition, knowledge and learning are transposed from facts about race put to memory and repeated on a test to forms of multicultural thought and practice that foster greater inclusion and democratic practice across curriculum and pedagogy. Learning becomes how one is positioned along with how one experiences the world, discernable through a racial analytic that is always in the making and limited in its ability to represent. Knowing becomes less ideas deposited than how what is considered worth knowing, and therefore who one is, is always already racial but can never be reduced to just race. Thus, Gresson is teaching us that while school curriculum and textbooks can provide a context for racial understanding, it is what they provoke in reconfiguring perception, and what is possible in repositioning thought and practice in ways consistent with new outlooks, that is a site of promise toward a global politics that does not pit humans against each other.

Race and Education is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, “Introduction: The Meanings of ‘Race and Education’”; Chapter 2, “‘Race’ and Education: Origins, Beliefs, and Themes”; Chapter 3, “Minorities and the ‘Education Gap’”; Chapter 4, “The Study and Practice of ‘Race’ in Education”; Chapter 5, “Race and Pedagogy”; Chapter 6, “‘Race and Education’ in Global Perspective”. The organization of the book is a familiar one, moving from different historical meanings to the contemporary issue of global multiculturalism; however, it is the content where the book stands apart. Chapter 1 begins, “In 1964, a young African American male transferred from the all Black Fredrick Douglas High School in West Baltimore, Maryland to Calvert Hall College High School in predominantly White Towson, Maryland” (p. 1). The reader soon finds out that the young man in this educational biography is the author. Hence, from the beginning of the text the relationship between race and education is never any further than the writer’s own lived history. Gresson goes on to describe his personal experiences with a shift from a colonial model taught at a minority school to the model of education at a private school, the latter intended for upper middle class whites. From Gresson’s stories, the careful reader will be quick to grasp the tension filled relationship between race and education, one fraught with complications, dilemmas, and problems with no easy answers. The colonial model erases minority history and by doing so inhibits self-understanding and the terms that might allow for a plentitude of self-worth. The private school model privileges majority history and distorts in the

direction of aggrandizing majority accomplishments. The reader learns that whether it is educational policy or practice, race is insinuated with the lived experiences of every U.S. American, not just US Americans of color.

Starting off with an exploration of the importance of discourse analysis for racial understanding and historical perspectives that include Thomas Jefferson and Fredrick Douglas, Chapter 2 is written as a response to the question, "Why is it so hard for everyone in the United States to get an excellent education?" (p. 23). The chapter does a nice job building on the concepts outlined in Chapter 1. Using the influential ideas of sociologist Franklin K. Giddings as a baseline, Gresson illustrates how democracy became intertwined with race, sex, and class via economic systems, research methods, political philosophies, and curricular practices. What draws the reader into the text, however, is the way Gresson weaves various social movements and government policies in with the ideas and perspectives of various scholars, from Antonio Gramsci and Michael Apple to Frantz Fanon, helping readers recognize the power of ideas. I did wonder, however, without the incorporation of white as a race and whiteness studies by Chapter 2, if many majority students would be able see themselves in the beginning of this text as it is written. With a focus on the negative effects of Anglo-American traditions and Western reason, and without a discussion of poor whites, can the demonization of whites be avoided? Or, at least, how might the image of whites be made more complicated so as to challenge the resistance of white teacher education students and the temptation to fall into overly simple good/bad racial binaries? Regardless, this chapter leads me to question the best pedagogical strategies when working with majority students. That is, should one confront them unapologetically with their own privilege or help them see themselves within and in relationship to oppressive practices of the past and present (the denigration of Jews, Italians, and the Irish comes to mind, as does the poverty of whites in the Appalachian Mountain region)? As readers will most likely grasp, Gresson shares these concerns, as he brings up these challenges in later chapters.

One of Gresson's questions in Chapter 2 regarding the ambivalent nature of education for racial minorities has stayed with me since I first read the text: "Why has education always been something both attractive and problematic for those at the margins of society" (p. 23)? Thinking about the indeterminate nature of education, I have returned over and over again to education's failure to live up to its promise when it comes to racial understanding and social equality. No better example exists in what is sought after and denied than the Ebonics controversy that erupted in Oakland, California in 1996. The story goes like this. The Oakland school board decided to honor the language spoken by the majority of their students by elevating Ebonics to the status of a language. The attempt to make Ebonics "official knowledge" (p. 33) soon caught the media's attention and instantaneously incited controversy and a

national backlash by those who were angered that Ebonics was to be accorded a status similar to Standard English. After intense, unrelenting scrutiny the board retreated and rescinded the decision and Ebonics was again relegated to the understudied dimensions of history. Students were denied the opportunity to study their linguistic heritage; Standard English was again the privileged center and Ebonics became nothing more than a non-language, a vehicle toward proper speech, grammar, and punctuation.

The attraction would be to learn the rich and varied history of how Ebonics came to be a language of many African Americans; the problem involved a politics of subjugation and reassertion of colonialist thinking. In this case, resistance by the school board to the colonial model of education ultimately led to reproduction of dominant culture, beliefs, and ways of knowing and being in the world. Gresson teaches the reader these key concepts. For those in the minority, in this case those who speak Ebonics, the choice has always been 1) learn to speak in ways different from family and community in order to gain access to privileged social groups organized by white middle class values, 2) reject ways of speaking that are different from one's own community and suffer the consequences, or 3) operate with a doubled language/doubled consciousness. In this example, as in many others, education has held so much potential but repeatedly falls short. For those who speak in ways other than Standard English, learning the dominant language can provide cultural capital and access to resources, while the larger effect might be the further distortion and denigration of the ideas, values, speech, and overall ways of being associated with an oppressed group.

Chapter 3 tackles the issue of an education gap with a sense of urgency, a heightened concern posits Gresson based on recent demographic changes in the United States where minorities together will constitute the majority in the near future. He documents key historical moments in the shifting terrain of race and educational attainment, noting that a "group's vulnerability to the education gap" (p. 57) has changed over time and this has changed a group's status in relation to education, and therefore its educational attainment. In this chapter, Gresson provides a powerful counterpoint to the ahistorical portrayals of racial differences in educational performance that make unequal scores an issue of a lack of preparedness and not cultural hegemony. He notes, at different moments throughout history, various minority groups within the U.S. have been faced with efforts at deculturation. What has coincided with those efforts at re-education by way of a colonial model involves the denigration of their knowledge and, as a result, they have poorer performance in school. The First Nation peoples experienced cultural genocide at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania and Asian Pacific Islanders' experienced it by way of WWII internment camps and efforts by the Asiatic Exclusion League to stop the immigration of Japanese and Koreans. During these historical moments, these marginalized groups

were portrayed as underperforming and without valuable knowledge to contribute to society. Gresson's point is that knowledge and how it is put to use is always already racialized.

Lest my portrayal seem a bit one-sided, Gresson is not a cynic. Reflecting on the civil rights movement, he asserts that Martin Luther King Jr. would be proud to find we have made great strides in crafting racial analytics in education and engaging in discussions on the topic. Yet, as Gresson points out, echoing the ideas shared by Gloria Ladson-Billings (in her stellar 2006 American Educational Research Association presidential address), the language we use to discuss racial differences remains problematic. For example, the focus on the "achievement" gap is undoubtedly misplaced; the correct focus is on an "educational debt" (p. 69). Showing great admiration for the "serious commitment" and "creative innovation" that have gone into proposed explanations and solutions for the education gap, Gresson also highlights the criticism that followed (p. 69). In keeping with the theme of the entire text, that race is a contested site, he concludes, "The education gap is real. But it is also a complex notion" (p. 71) and there are a myriad of ways to understand the gap and a myriad of recommendations for change. Chapter 3 presents the education gap as a conflict laden, unsettled and unsettling site, one that is continuously being re-written through the language used and ideas developed.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed discussion of the ongoing culture wars and their effects on how issues of racial equity get framed. Gresson tells the story of the historical development of various fields of study, from educational psychology to curriculum studies, and changing perspectives on what is most important to teach "the downtrodden of all races" (Pinar cited in Gresson, p. 76). Theories of racial uplift focused on the positive contributions of minorities, industrial perspectives were grounded in the belief that a strong vocational education would lead to racial harmony, and liberal viewpoints stressed that a highly educated and culturally aware contingent among historically oppressed groups might guide the remainder toward prosperity. In his discussion of U.S. American sociology in the 1920s and 30s, Gresson stresses, "the emphasis was on understanding race and education as part of the assimilation of minorities into a legally sanctioned pecking order" (p. 81). Through a redirection in academic thought, the 1950s and 60s saw new forms of research, ones that emphasized structural analysis, issues of power, and alternate research methods. Gresson expounded how important the transformations in academic studies were to conceptions of race. A particularly powerful example, he describes how Mamie and Kenneth Clark, and their colleagues, conducted doll-preference studies on African American girls and found that African American dolls were viewed more negatively and of less value. Gresson remarks that these findings were presented to the Supreme Court as evidence of the detrimental effects of racial discrimination on self-

understanding and the value one attributed to one's own culture. One thing is undeniable by the end of Chapter 4, knowledge production has a profound effect on how racial differences and the origins of inequality get constructed. Chapter 4 is promising for what it does in documenting the proliferation of perspectives that takes place on race and education from the 1960s onward.

In Chapter 5, Gresson turns our attention toward the question of what it means to be an effective teacher for students who live at the margins. He offers the reader an insightful review of the literature on the traits of teachers who promote equity in the classroom. Readers get a concise summary of positive teacher attributes, after which each of the qualities are explored more fully. A key sub-section, "School Knowledge" (p. 95) focuses on how material gets presented differently according to the social class standing of the students served by the school. Gresson observes that while it is important to prepare teachers who are aware of their 1) attitudes and assumptions and 2) the hidden curriculum for all students, it is particularly crucial for poor and minority students. He stresses that quality teachers of historically oppressed students are able to recognize and account for the worldviews through which students learn, ones based in family and community and not always in alignment with the outlooks privileged by schools. Quality teachers also have to be able to build community partnerships and develop relationships with students that instill resiliency and a sense of belonging. Head spinning yet? You have to keep up; Gresson isn't done yet. He is ready to turn to the literature on reform strategies that help create the schools historically oppressed students deserve.

Helpful for the reader, Gresson divides reform initiatives into race-focused and critical pedagogies, ones that he notes have different emphases even as they share the aim of educational equity. In what is a hallmark of the entire text, Gresson does not merely describe each reform movement. Rather, in ways that foster thoughts of change, of thesis meeting its anti-thesis and the friction that results, this sub-section of Chapter 5 describes transformation/counter-transformation efforts in a dialectical fashion. Multicultural pedagogy with its emphasis on pluralism and difference incites criticism from conservatives who believe the strength of the nation is founded on a unifying Euro-American tradition, as well as from radicals who find it too weak to address structural inequities. Afrocentric Education, which aims to capture the distinctive qualities of African people, and educate about African civilizations prior to the arrival of whites, has incited opposition from those who believe a "return to Africa" (p. 9) is a myth and a focus on the past evades the problems of the here and now. Anti-racist education too incites these by now familiar forms of friction. Proponents note it can provide privileged students with lenses through which to see alternate perspectives and validate the concerns of marginalized students. Critics have associated anti-racist education with indoctrination for its hard-line stance of non-

racism and view efforts at race neutrality as anti-democratic and political correctness extremism.

In the final sub-section for this chapter, Gresson redirects the focus to critical perspectives on race, education, and reform. Readers learn that in addition to school-based research, there are a number of critical pedagogical perspectives that offer insight into education and learning. From postmodernism and postcolonialism to feminism and queer theory, this chapter explores criticality from multiple angles. With great acumen, Gresson traces the origins of critical standpoints through the rise of the Frankfort School in the 20th century to the emergence of critical race theory in the 1990s. Of particular note, Chapter 5 is where “Whiteness and Postcolonial Studies” (p. 115) is located, nestled between a discussion of resegregation and race issues in higher education. I imagine that depending on the intended audience, whiteness studies might be more effective if it was expanded and relocated to chapter 1 or 2 of the text as a strategy for orienting majority students. Yet, there are clear arguments for keeping it in its current form as well. Too often when it comes to discussions of race, the needs, desires and ultimately the comfort of majority students shape academic theory and practice, often to the detriment of explorations of major African American historical figures and the most troubling aspects of U.S. race relations. When I teach majority students, my strategy has been to use concepts of place, class, and whiteness to draw them into multicultural issues from the beginning, helping them to see that race, class, and gender analyses have implications for their lives as well. Whatever the case, if an educator intends to use this primer in a teacher education multiculturalism course where majority students are, well, in the majority, and suspects this might be an issue, ancillary readings on whiteness might be helpful.

“Race, Pedagogy, and Higher Education” (p. 117) illustrates for the reader that just as in K-12 settings, race has been at issue in post-secondary education. First, Gresson notes that race studies in higher education have been organized into four categories: knowledge production, campus climate, recruitment and retention, and pedagogical practice and curriculum content. He then moves into an insightful exploration of teacher education. Future teachers need to understand how race is a factor in expectations and interactions with students and gain an awareness of the pedagogical styles that engender critical outlooks and the ability to make informed decisions, he asserts. Chapter 5 is promising for the ways Gresson grounds concepts, such as “resistance pedagogy” (p. 121) within the historical struggles of Blacks to gain access to higher education; in the case of resistance pedagogy, he makes historical connections to the ideas of Fredrick Douglas. Both historical and theoretical, Gresson has the creative capacity to work theory across concrete historical circumstances, illustrating how each are born of the other. The Morrill Act of 1862 is drawn into relationship with theories of Black liberal education and the creation of Historically

Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Similarly, the emergence of area studies in colleges and universities in the 1960s is connected to the cultural wars over what knowledge is of most worth and challenges to a traditional canon. In this sense, Chapter 5 and 6 illustrate how conceptions of race, as well as racial experiences, are undergoing constant change and at the same time remain a persistent problem within higher education. Racial experiences are contingent, multiple, and fragmented but also represent what Foucault (1985) understood as a “history of the present.” That is, thought from the past has been transposed in some form to shape the present. It is clear that higher learning, supposedly an intellectual and disembodied pursuit, actually signifies the symbolic and material duality of racial understanding.

Possibly so as to not get readers depressed over the state of contemporary life, Gresson turns to the perils of globalization long before Chapter 6 ends, with a particular focus on popular culture and Diaspora studies. What does it mean for discourse, identity, and race when the Internet creates never before seen social spaces, ones where language is fashioned outside of national contexts? Additionally, what does it mean for collective memory and nation building when people are both more nomadic and cross-national, transposing lifestyles, viewpoints, and ideas as they move from context to context? The key point of Chapter 6 is that even with all the extant scholarship on race and education, self and other have intertwined in new and unforeseen ways that demand we forefront meaning making as performative, hybrid, and shifting in new times. The question, “who am I?” becomes more complicated in a globalized world, one where an individual might listen to hip hop music from India, interact with Brazilian friends on Facebook while sipping coffee from Sumatra, and eat kosher food at an international deli, all within an average morning. In Chapter 6, questions of authenticity are eclipsed by ones of situatedness and fragmentation and the notion of a static identity gives way to one of an ever-changing montage.

As a final point, in the midst of internationalization, Gresson is less interested in a new repertoire of concepts than effective ways to translate existing ideas to meet the call of global education studies. For example, Gresson reaffirms the ongoing importance of studying the concept of racism within globalization. And, he summons ethnography as “an especially powerful” tool to help with capturing and making meaning of our international cross-cultural experiences (p. 147). Gresson describes this attempt to understand the relationship between symbolic difference and material inequality internationally as “global multiculturalism” (p. 148). It is interesting that Chapter 6 reads as less hopeful than it does determined that changes in language can positively affect how we think, and therefore how we act and interact within international contexts. It is unmistakable that for Gresson, the global education literature lacks a well-theorized and consistent focus on diversity and equity issues and this is of great concern. For him, “The challenge for future discourse on race and

education is twofold: to acknowledge the persistence of 'racial' interests that undermine progressive efforts to realize greater global social justice; yet recognize the gains made and their implications" (p. 151).

Conclusion

We have come a long way from the days when curriculum was no more than objectives, scope, sequence, and evaluation. Now curriculum concerns include the politics of representation, hidden curriculum, narrative formula, embodied knowing, praxis, memory work, reproduction, resistance, to name only a few. Let us never return to a time when we felt secure with "comfort texts" and "transmission models" of curriculum and pedagogy. Goodbye and good riddance. No, never again. In fact, by the end of Gresson's text we are moved to understand not merely how we experience and are positioned within an always already raced, classed, gendered, sexed world, but also how we must produce and learn out of "stuck places" where our ideas and concepts fall apart. Throughout the text, Gresson teaches readers that as long as we live in a hierarchical, unjust world, we must recognize just how elusive knowledge might be. This does not mean we give up truth altogether and dismiss events that have and do occur around race and racism. Rather, Gresson teaches us to give up on knowledge as merely what one controls and puts to memory without difficulty, without limits. Truth in a racist, sexist, classist, and homophobic world is that which just as often is beyond the grasp of knowledge and must be understood through performance and story telling that reveals how meaning is made of the world, of events, as well as critical analysis of how that meaning is insinuated within language, culture, and power.

Accordingly, and a testament to Gresson's brilliance, he refuses to give readers just the facts of race. He knows that what is just as important as dates and names are reading practices and what they produce as translations of experience, as truth effects that ripple out long after events have taken place. So when Gresson tells the story of "almost dying" when his mother had complications with his birth, and she was rushed to a white hospital and initially refused care, he is testifying to how his lived experience shapes his worldview and perspectives on race and education (personal communication). And, when he visits his daughter's website and finds she has taken on a hybrid, indeterminable identity, as an "18-year-old female of African, Native American, and European ancestry", the juxtaposition of his lived history where race divided on no uncertain terms with her contingent self-understanding leads Gresson to realize, "my daughter belongs to another generation and another world" (p. 133). Here traditional concepts of race are inadequate to the shifting nature of life experiences; truth is just beyond our efforts to represent it. It makes sense then that Gresson wants

to provoke reading practices that are discomfoting, ones that unsettle with strangeness and unfamiliarity as an effect of what is read.

Why think race as performative and representation alone as inadequate? For too long knowledge and learning has been separated from bodily differences and how such differences are given meaning in the world, the result of a belief in the plentitude of knowledge that warrants a universalizing praxis and resisting subject. In this sense, knowledge thought of as most worthy has been successively “deraced,” “declassed,” “degendered” and “desexed.” That is, it has been decontented of its infinite variations and breakdowns in the indelible pursuit of perfectibility. In contrast to the pursuit of philosophical consistency as the highest order of thought, when we think race as performative, what becomes available involves a myriad of counter-readings such that bodies are treated as subjects, acting in the world where they are both engaged and constrained by various contexts, and through practicing change those very contexts (and are changed by them) in a myriad of ways. This is something other to philosophical utopianism and academic heroics not conditioned by historical reality. Gresson grasps the idea that race studies in education involve subjects experiencing the world and as such the meanings they make of race always already come through racial bodies that are present to the world and each other differently. His pedagogy shares in notions of learning described by Bhabha (1994), Bolatagici (2004), and McCarthy (1995). While he is focused on concepts, has also attended to acting subjects, ones that challenge intellectual categories of mind/body, oppressed/oppressor, and center/margin as both insightful and inadequate. In my estimation, as one reads this primer, it is crucial to keep in mind the ways in which Gresson juxtaposes representation and performance, key reading practices that bring vitality and life to the text.

Why focus on the “education gap” and the “study and practice” of race in education? Because knowledge is so often conceived as existing prior to consciousness and language. While not to negate that the empirical world exists, its significance exists before neither. Discourse is much more than a vehicle for transmitting ideas and while my students will tell you I am a stickler for “good” grammar, my one concern with a rules and regulations approach to speaking and writing is that it enables glossing over all the messiness and playfulness of language. Why is there so much resistance in teacher education to critical investigations into the foundations of authority and the very real problem of epistemological, emotional, and physical violence suffered daily by those who live on the underside of our binaries? Is higher learning about little more than aligning our depictions of reality with those styles that have come to be known as credible (see Benjamin, 1999). Certainly we can see the press of narrative formulas upon academic research and writing. Yes, we can look back upon our scholarship and

say we cannot believe we wrote this or that and look at how much better our scholarship has become. Yet, this is a matter of a small degree of change.

Our horizon of intelligibility, I would argue, is so dominated by the ideals of development and progress that even tactics such as deconstruction become in practice little more than tools to help us advance our respective fields. What if we wrote back across our scholarship to offer counter-readings of our initial work, to focus on absences, concealments, pitfalls, and alternate conceptions (Malewski, 2007)? One might think that what I am suggesting undercuts the very foundation of our academic endeavors. The point, however, is not to paralyze but to clarify the very terms by which claims are made toward alternate readings. Attending to how particular discourses also shape the contours of their resistance, complicity is insinuated with the very terms for intelligibility. The idea is to think what remains possible in the “study and practice” of race and education in tracing backwards into the fissures of thought to fold forward into a sort of unknowing as a way of knowing.

Why does Gresson close the text with a discussion of global multiculturalism? He reminds readers toward the end of the book, just as he did in the introduction, that his interest is perspective, policy, and practice. Yet, his writing reveals he is not willing to give up on artistry and aesthetics. It is not surprising then that a discussion of democratic potential within Hip Hop culture and Rastafarian music closes the text. As I read his ideas on music, I thought about Nicole Guillory's (2009) work on Hip Hop culture and Black feminist pedagogy. In this essay she explains, as a supervisor of interns, the numerous ways in which high school students employ rap culture to bring new life and novel perspectives to canonical texts. For example, she describes how students' have “drawn a platinum grille on their illustration of the Pardoner during their study of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*” and, when asked about the connections between “gold toothed pimps” and the Pardoner, highlight themes of excess and greed (p. 209). Not unlike the Ebonics controversy I described earlier, the connections these students make between subjugated and official knowledge stirs up great anxiety in teachers. Guillory tells us that in reference to these students' “creative engagement,” teachers remarked how they “‘strayed too far’ from the authors' actual descriptions” and need to learn the facts and interpretations that will be on texts (p. 210).

In the remainder of the essay, Guillory goes on to think through what it might mean to take Hip Hop and rap seriously as a form of public pedagogy that has transformed the ways school-aged generations see themselves and the world. Well, I pondered, what if teacher educators took seriously their responsibility to teach future teachers about “learning in the making”? That is, about the implications of a shift in focus from the assumed “original truth” of authors (too often dead white males) to the myriad of feasible readings offered by students as an instructional strategy? Then in some ways the focus would be less on correct representations and one right answers

and more about complications and ambivalences as the very terms by which we might learn to read against convention, to read for difference and proliferation rather than the same. If teacher educators are not teaching these strategies, then maybe Gresson sees this as his role. Maybe that is what motivated him to write this primer. Maybe the most profound pedagogical lesson regarding race and education he is sharing with others is this: to present something as the real deal is not the same as attending to how it is produced.

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