

**Still centering the margins:
Assimilative pressure, resistance, and transformation in psychology education**

Jill Hill, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Psychology
Wells College
Aurora, New York
jhill@wells.edu

Vic Muñoz, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
Wells College
Aurora, New York
vmunoz@wells.edu

Megan Correia
Wells College
Aurora, NY
mcorreia@wells.edu

American Educational Research Association
Division B-Curriculum Studies / Section 2: Critical Perspectives and Practices
April 11, 2007
Chicago

Abstract

Psychology has been dominated by Western colonizing approaches that systematically subjugate knowledges, pedagogies, and methodologies by and of people of color. Here we explore our own experiences from multiple perspectives within a department of psychology at a liberal arts college. We provide an overview of the context within which we began the work of curriculum transformation two years ago to correct for historical omissions of both knowledge and pedagogical approaches, discuss our process of transformation and resistance, and examine where we are today. The challenges of transforming psychology into a field which supports cultural competence, social justice, Indigenous, feminist, decolonial approaches to knowledge are ones which must be attended to on multiple institutional levels. We offer our experiences and make suggestions for educators who are also working to transform psychological education.

Difficult Beginnings: Goals, Hopes, and Vision

Wells College has been involved in intensive dialogue about diversity for the last five years. There are several salient examples of this commitment; the development of a Community Standards Statement, the Presidents Committee on Diversity and three subcommittees for Faculty, Staff, and Students which engage with issues of diversity as these impact these groups, a newly endorsed Strategic Plan which has diversity threaded and embedded throughout as a core value for the future of the college. It is within this milieu that in early fall of 2004, the four psychology faculty at Wells College agreed to take up the task of diversifying the psychology curriculum. This decision to diversify our curriculum was precipitated by a new tenure-track colleague who brought cultural competence expertise and by the longstanding commitment to diversity of the two tenured faculty. We all acknowledged that psychology has been dominated by Western perspectives and has not adequately represented the experience of diverse groups and cultures. Our commitment to transformation felt both strong and tenuous, as it became clear that the actual process of transforming curriculum from western to non-western, from patriarchal to feminist, from dominant pedagogies to critical pedagogies is challenging, frustrating, and conflictive. Our different areas in the field of psychology, our research approaches, and our own diverse cultural backgrounds led to misunderstandings and profound conflicts as we engaged what we called and continue to believe is a worthy endeavor.

Worldviews structure how we teach and learn. As women, we share experiences of gender; as feminists, we share political views, but as people from different cultures, we often find the places of intersectionality (Anzaldúa, 1999) difficult terrain to negotiate. For example, two of the psychology faculty identifies as white and two identify as people of color. In terms of socioeconomic class there are also diverse backgrounds. This is also true in relation to sexual orientation, religion, spirituality, and age. We all hold doctorates in psychology, but have been educated at different graduate schools in different regions of the United States. While our personal (private) and professional (public) identities are not the focus of this paper, our worldviews and correspondent privilege, which stem from these identities, are central to the work of transforming the psychology curriculum.

In this paper, we, the two psychology faculty of color and a student who is white and working class will share our experiences of this ongoing process of transformation. We will center our experiences as people of color whose identities also intersect with class, gender, sexuality, spirituality, and language within particular worldviews in individual and shared ways. We will discuss how we developed a grant proposal and then co-directed a seed grant which was match by institutional support. This grant focused on recruitment and retention of minority students into psychology through developing our own multicultural competence. We hope that our ongoing experiences in transforming the psychology curriculum to be more inclusive and welcoming to all who have been placed on the margins of the field can support the work of others involved in centering subjugated knowledges. We offer models of how to grapple with the tough issues involved in the diversification of psychology and teaching for multicultural competence.

Transforming the Standard: Necessary Elements of Revolution

The primary factor that allowed us to feel that transformation was possible was that as a diverse yet small department, we were in the position to become agents of necessary and liberating change within our institution. As an example of beginning a dialogue on change and diversity, in the summer of 2001, one of the faculty of color wrote an article, "Diversity's New Question(ions)" (Muñoz, 2001) which focused on transgenderism and sexual orientation. This was published in the official publication of the college, *The Express*. In that same summer in *The Express*, the President of the College, Lisa Marsh Ryerson wrote the following:

While encountering new ideas is not always comfortable, this experience is essential to education and development. To grow, you must accept alternative points of view. This is the path to knowledge and wisdom.

We imagined the materialization of a common vision through student and faculty collaboration to create a safe space for all to think and communicate honestly and openly with each other. We hoped for a space to freely share our dreams of wanting our department and community to be governed by social justice, providing equal access and opportunity for *all*. We understood that a conscious commitment to the *entire* process and its duration was necessary in order to engage in *difficult dialogues* and *difficult knowledge* (Sue, Bingham, Porche-Burke, & Vasquez, 1999; Britzman, 1998).

Building on this conceptual foundation, we planned for faculty and students to regularly examine the interpersonal dynamics among us in relation to this transformation. This "checking-in," which is both important and necessary for the process, would provide a continuous feedback loop which would serve as a guiding force and a form of assessment. It also would allow each participant to remain fully engaged and provide a vehicle for meeting needs of each individual involved. Faculty and students could share their experiences with racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression. We would also identify and critically examine the ways in which we consciously and unconsciously perpetuate oppression (Malcolm, 2005; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002) within and outside the institutional setting. Such awareness is critical in order to dismantle oppressive structures and pedagogies and replace them with ones that liberate. An institutional initiative toward integrating diversity throughout the community includes the community standard of inclusivity. This standard supports a positive and inviting environment for *all* community members. We knew that administrative support of curricular transformation is a critical component for success.

Working through Difficult Dialogues and Difficult Knowledge

Sue, Bingham, Porché-Burk, and Vasquez (1999) propose that what is needed is a "diversification of psychology" as a way to develop what they term, "multicultural competence." They explore five themes central to this process. One of the themes focuses on "facilitating difficult dialogues on race, gender, and sexual orientation."

Resistances to diversifying psychology, both the pedagogy and the content, constitute "difficult knowledge" in education resulting in "difficult dialogues" between faculty and between faculty and students. Britzman's (1998) concept of difficult knowledge encompasses the processes through which the learner – both teachers and students – resist learning what is difficult to bear; what no one wants to admit hurts, what is unconscious and permeates the classroom, yet is not addressed, and what is threatening. These resistances to difficult knowledge are the subtext to dialogue in classrooms, but are rarely acknowledged. By denying or keeping these resistances to learning unconscious it is not possible to truly engage with difference. Britzman proposes the need for new pedagogies to engage the difficult dialogues through new approaches to teaching. Britzman states;

Traumatic residuals of genocide, ethnic hatred, aggression, and forms of state-sanctioned--and hence legal--social violence require[s] educators to think carefully about their own theories of learning and how stuff of such difficult knowledge becomes pedagogical. This exploration needs to do more than confront the difficulties of learning from another's painful encounter with victimization, aggression, and the desire to live on one's own terms. It must also be willing to risk approaching the internal conflicts the learner brings to the learning.

We hoped to examine any resistances to "difficult dialogues" and "difficult knowledge" through examples of the ideological conflicts between the psychology faculty involved in diversifying the curriculum.

Developing Cultural Competence

In the spring of 2005, the psychology faculty held three forums as part of our Diversity and Psychology Colloquium. Each colloquium had a theme and associated recommended readings which we made available to everyone by placing them in a common space that was accessible. Since we rely on the Honor Code at Wells, we left it up to everyone to access and return the readings in a timely manner so others could do the same. We identified three topics for discussion and invited a faculty member from another discipline to be a respondent. Three faculty participated as respondents; one from Anthropology, one from Women's Studies, and one from Sociology.

The topics for each colloquium were the following:

1. Western Research and Indigenous Peoples
2. Gender Dysphoria or Euphoria?
3. Most Children Left Behind

The first colloquium sought to take a critical view of western science and to center Indigenous methodologies. The second sought to critique Western approaches to diagnosis of mental health by centering the experiences of transgender and transsexual people. The third colloquium sought to provide a critical view of socioeconomic class within education and to center the experiences of working class,

poor, and marginalized students. The three faculty respondents focused attention on the issues from their own disciplinary, class, cultural, gender, and epistemological positions and greatly added to the dialogue within psychology.

Drawing on the themes raised through this series of dialogues, such as, the importance of centering subjugated knowledges, experiences of working-class students and other marginalized students, critiquing approaches to diagnosis, and the importance of inclusion of culture and ethnicity in the teaching of psychology, we then proposed to continue this work through integrating these themes into the psychology curriculum itself. To this end we wrote a grant proposal to the Committee on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention, and Training (American Psychological Association) in which we outlined our goals and purposes in diversifying our curriculum. A central goal was to develop multicultural or cultural competence in both ourselves as faculty and in our students. We were awarded a CEMRRAT seed grant and the college matched the funds. We also devoted a large part of our department budget to diversifying the curriculum through purchasing books, films, and through transcribing focus groups and stories from the tutorial, "Diversity and Psychology" which we began in fall 2005 and which is ongoing through spring 2007. This is a 1 credit course which meets weekly for 50 minutes and which we had planned to develop into a requirement for all psychology majors.

We developed questions that we wanted to grapple with the multicultural experts that we had invited to campus for a series of talks and workshops with the campus community and with the psychology faculty. Dr. Janet Helms, Dr. Maria Nieto Senour, and Dr. Oliva Espín visited campus during the fall of 2005. The campus talks began with Dr. Helms' visit in September and continued with the visits by Drs. Senour and Espín through late October. These questions illustrate the parameters of our thinking, our worries, and concerns as educators. Each of the multicultural experts was provided these questions as an introduction to what we were thinking. We did not expect for each question to be answered, but rather that we would bring these questions with us as we learned about developing cultural competence. These questions could be seen as guideposts that we aspired to use to steer our course.

- What is needed at the institutional level (senior management) to support multicultural approaches to teaching and learning? To support recruitment and retention of students of color into psychology?
- What are the institutional supports necessary to promote and support the recruitment of people of color into psychology? Are there specific approaches that are needed? How can these be nourished and sustained?
- Where does the discipline and practice of psychology need to go to recruit young people of color?
- Does psychology need to make a strong and explicit commitment to social, environmental, and economic justice to make itself relevant to the world today?
- Why does psychology as a discipline need to be political or acknowledge the politics of itself? How?
- What is needed within the curriculum to foster multicultural approaches in psychology and other disciplines?
- What pedagogies would be most useful to support multicultural approaches?

- What are useful pedagogical approaches in the classroom when the topics being discussed are race, racism, and culture but there are only one or two students of color and everyone else is white? How is this experience different if the faculty member is white or a person of color?
- How do people of color respond to and engage with white people of privilege when they compare their experience as a way to understand? For example, comparing an experience of racism (being called an ethnic slur) to an experience of feeling “left out”.
- How do people of color attend to the challenge of translating experiences as people of color without having them rendered invisible in the process of translation? For example, “We all have difficult lives and challenges to deal with.”
- How do people of color engage in this process of translation without being totally drained? How do white people engage in this process of translation without being totally drained?
- Is class just as important as race in oppression? How do they intersect for people of color and for white people? What makes it possible for white people not to see race and privilege?
- How has the concept of “race” changed in recent years? For example, in the U.S. census and among young people.
- What can faculty of color do for students of color in terms of mentoring and supporting students throughout their college experience? What can white faculty do?
- What kinds of dialogues need to occur among faculty of color and white faculty in this process of transformation? How can these dialogues take place?

As part of our proposal we outlined the following expected outcomes:

Specific Outcome	Measures
Centralize diversity in the psychology syllabi	Outline of diversity issues as they appear throughout the psychology syllabi as part of departmental review of academic year for next two years.
Increase diversity in student projects within psychology courses	Outline of diversity issues as they appear in student projects in each psychology class as part of departmental review of academic year for next two years.
Increase multicultural competence demonstrated in senior capstone projects	Comparison of number of student projects explicitly addressing issues of racial and cultural identity in projects for next two years; qualitative analysis of the level of sophistication of the student efforts.
Inclusion of issues raised in colloquia	Outline of efforts by each faculty member to insert issues raised in colloquia series into psychology classes

series back into curriculum	as part of departmental review of academic year for next two years
Increase ethnic minority student recruitment	Comparison of number of students representing ethnic minority groups majoring in psychology for next four semesters

Emergent Themes From the Talks on Campus

After three multicultural experts completed their talks and workshops, the psychology faculty held focus groups with students in three courses; two psychology courses (General Psychology and Abnormal Psychology) and in one of the first-year seminars which a psychology faculty was teaching. All the students in these courses as well as other psychology courses had been either strongly encouraged or required to attend the series of talks and workshops. We asked the students the following questions:

1. What triggered your heart and head? What has stayed with you?
2. In what ways, if any, was your knowledge of cultural, gender, sexual, class diversity expanded?
3. Do you feel that the speakers raised your awareness of your own culture, race, gender, and/or class?
4. Do you feel that the speakers raised your awareness of others' culture, race, gender, and/or class?
5. Did these speakers increase your interest in the study of psychology?
6. Creating safe space that is also challenging came up in conversation time with the speakers. Do you have some ideas about how to create this kind of environment in the classroom?
7. What would you like to learn more about in relation to culture, ethnicity, and psychology?
8. How would you want to learn that?

Reading through the student responses, which were audio taped and then transcribed, the following themes emerged:

- Self-Reflection As a Method of Inquiry
- Being White & White Privilege
- Sexual Orientation, Gender, and Class Need to be Part of Diversity
- What Does Diversity Mean? How is it experienced differently by students of color and white students? High school experience diverse or not
- Classrooms as Spaces Where People Can Get to Know Each Other
- Developing Voice & Ability to Speak Out
- Ways of Including Diversity in the Curriculum
- Speakers/Practitioners Important for Learning About Psychology
- Creating Challenging and Safe Spaces for Dialogue

Examples of these themes are illustrated through the following student statements from the focus groups:

Student: Dr. _____ kind of made me feel bad for being white. Like guilty about it. But you know, I think I never really thought about it before. 'Cause like I said my high school wasn't too diverse. So I hadn't thought about the white power thing. So it was good to have it pointed out, but I think Dr. _____ made me feel bad for being white. But the other two didn't so much make a point about that. They just said everybody was different, and they went from there.

Student: I have to say that I don't think you can make everybody feel safe, 'cause I almost cried during that thing where we had to tell people about each other, or ourselves. I, oh God, I hate doing that. I don't want to talk in class. I just want to sit there and learn myself, and that's fine with me, but nobody likes that. That's not okay, and I don't think you can make people feel safe always. I mean, like, some people yes, but not always.

Student: I agree that I really enjoy the speakers and I would really encourage us to have more come in, or even just some of the films that we've seen. I think I retained a lot of the different quotes, or, and from the speakers, different things that they've said, whereas when you're reading it in the book and highlighting it or reading it a couple times, I mean you kind of get the gist but it's a lot more meaningful when you hear a person say it with, like, certain intonation or they really make a point of, "This is what I want you to hear me saying," you know. And I agree that I think I want to learn more about how it affects certain cultures. It seems like we're always learning the white perspective about this, how it affects this, you know, according to this white male psychologist, and how it's supposed to affect everybody. But obviously there are different situations and different things affect different people, and I definitely think that heritage, and culture and race has a lot to do with how different psychological aspects affect everybody. So, I think knowing case studies or having someone come in and talk about their forte, which is in a certain subject or a certain disorder, even within a certain culture would be wonderful. I think it would be a real great experience, or even like a field trip to see it firsthand. That would be a trip around the world. That's what I'm thinking. The only way to see it would be to, like, go everywhere and that's you to learn, see it in real life.

Student: I think especially Dr. _____ presentation I became like not self conscious per se, but definitely aware of like any kind of difference between race because she was so like there is racism; here it is. She was like so blunt and in your face, it was kind of like I freaked out a little bit. So I started noticing that the most _____, I was like wait, am I a bad person? Do you know? I started analyzing like everything I did because I'm white so I automatically get that white power thing even if I don't ask for it. I guess it did make me a little self conscious and I was just like trying to watch everything I did to make sure like am I being racist and I don't know it? Am I making judgments? But by the time we

got to the last one, I felt better about it because they were kind of like “No, everyone does this. You’re not a bad person.” You just have to talk about it to make it better.

Student: I’d to learn more about I think like sexual discrimination and gender ‘cause we have talked about racial, but in my classes, that hasn’t come up yet, the sexual discrimination. And I’d like to learn that. And then also well I have sort of a suggestion. Maybe instead of having the freshmen take Wells 111, we should take like a diversity course ‘cause I think that would be more beneficial.

Student: The speakers made me think about how it’s more than just like checking a little box on a piece of paper because I’m white, but there’s so many different forms of white that it’s hard to tell which is which and usually if you fall into the category of white, like it doesn’t end up the same scene as anything else, whereas there’s so much more background than what’s like on the surface and you have to like talk to people to figure out what’s been going on and what their history is.

Student: I definitely think the speakers really helped us look inside ourselves to see what we really think about other races and other cultures and economic standing. ‘Cause I know when Dr. ____ talked, I definitely was thinking about how I view other people and what I think and I really like that that raised our awareness and challenged us to think more.

Student: I feel like the speakers really helped our community as well as college community to sort of look outside of the box and think about cultural diverse issues and to sort of expand our knowledge and push us to include that more in our curriculum.

Student: I feel like, we did the check-in after the second speaker, ____, and I feel like after we did that and I was more comfortable with the people in the room because I honestly didn’t know half the people in the room when we started the class. And I definitely feel more comfortable saying things in front of them because they’re not strangers. Like, I actually feel like I know them more. So, if we were doing a check-in at the beginning of a semester, you know, just learning something about everyone in the room, so you don’t feel like you’re just there and you’re kind of in a room full of people who you don’t know how they’re going to respond to what you say.

Student: Yeah, we just went around and we just said basic things about ourselves, like we started off pretty much focusing on family. Like, are you a twin? Do you have any brothers and sisters? How do you get along with your family and how would your friend describe you was pretty much what we started with, and I think it was great because I really feel like I know the people in the class now.

Student: I agree. I think that really helped a lot of people, myself included. I think even just starting with a, why are you here, why are you taking this class. I know a lot of people are taking this class for requirements, but also are interested in Abnormal Psych, that type of thing and just to see where everyone's coming from, what their backgrounds are with the subject. 'Cause I think a lot of times what you bring to the class is really telling of what type of person you are, where you're coming from, but also giving, I know it's kind of hard sometimes in psychology, but giving different viewpoints, diverse viewpoints on different topics, speaking of different classes in general, not really psych. But, I know sometimes in some classes there's just one viewpoint and if you're not with that viewpoint then you're wrong and, you know, you can't think differently then this. And, so I think, and so giving different viewpoints and feeling comfortable questioning and challenging in the classroom I think is really important. Some people sometimes think that if they challenge their professors, _____ isn't allowed, or, I really think that that's part of the class, you know, asking questions and getting more out of everyone. I think that would definitely help.

Making Space: Our Individual Stories of Transformation

This section of the paper provides a place for us to describe and reflect upon our own individual journey in this transformational work. We offer it as a way to share our experiences in diversity work within a mostly white college. We do not intend to portray our experiences as "the truth" or as the only possible interpretation of this work. We do want to explore how our worldviews which include our relationships and experiences with the intellectual, emotional, behavioral, spiritual, cultural, and sexual create the foundation for our forms of resistance and self-determination. (See Figure 1. Model of Assimilative Pressure, Resistance, and Transformation).

Jill Hill: Land Claims

Wells College is located in the village of Aurora, which is in the heart of the traditional lands of Cayuga Nation, one of the six tribes of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This fact was not lost on me when I applied for the assistant professor of psychology position at the college. In fact, it was one of the main reasons I applied.

When I interviewed for the position at the college, I arrived and departed from the village literally in the dark. Because of this, I was not prepared for what I saw when I moved to Aurora in the summer of 2004. Surrounding the village were (and are) huge signs that say "NO SOVEREIGN NATION, NO RESERVATION." These signs are distributed by the euphemistically named hate group, Upstate Citizens for Equality or UCE. The signs are posted throughout Cayuga and other surrounding counties. Seeing the signs on a daily basis has been very painful, however, over time, I have been able to steel myself against the emotional effects of these very clear messages of racism and prejudice directed toward American Indian people.

The primary reason this hate group formed was in response to a land claim filed by the Cayuga Nation in federal court in 1974. This land claim sought return of 64,015 acres of ancestral land located on the north side of Cayuga Lake. Tensions as well as litigation between the county, its current residents, and the tribe have raged for more than three decades. Although a number of decisions have been handed down by U.S.

courts (2nd Circuit & Supreme), the current status of the claim is confusing and ambiguous at the very least, and certainly does not seem to favor the Cayugas.

I provide this backdrop for sharing my experience because, for me, it truly mirrors what we have experienced on a micro-level within our department. I was hired to create change within the psychology department. When we began discussions of transformation, our white colleagues verbally agreed to the changes we sought. One of the first steps in transformation was the proposal that Vic described above. My white colleagues' reactions to the proposal I wrote clearly but also subtly told me that while I brought a unique perspective, it would not be acceptable to expect others within the department to attempt to change or modify what or how they taught or thought. Instead of responding to these subtle messages, I pressed on in collaboration with Vic to reclaim an equal part of the intellectual landscape within our curriculum, department, and division.

I successfully proposed two new courses, Indigenous Psychologies and Indigenous Women's experiences. With a social sciences colleague, I co-developed a First Nations and Indigenous Studies academic minor. I taught all of my courses from a multicultural perspective and expected and challenged my students to develop their own competencies. Changes started to happen in a rather short amount of time and we subtly but clearly communicated the message that we expected to our department to be accountable and responsive to the changing identities and needs of the students and communities we served.

In our continuing attempts to transform the psychology curriculum, we have been accused of many things: reverse racism, aggressiveness, disrespectfulness, replacing the standard curriculum with inferior curriculum, etc. We have experienced the entrenchment of our white colleagues in their privilege and their refusal to share the "land." One positive outcome of our efforts has been the response of our students. In a very short time, our students seem to have developed not only the beginnings of multicultural competence, but also a deep sense of resilience in confronting difficult issues and knowledges. Additionally, they have intuitively committed to collaboration with one another in these critical endeavors. I have developed an immense respect for our students because they have been willing to lean into their own discomfort, engage in critical self-examination, work through it with one another, and grow in ways they hadn't previously imagined.

This is so much more than I can say for my other colleagues. While they have continued to contest our rightful and justified claims to intellectual and academic spaces, the students have become empowered in their learning and applications of their new knowledge. The most illustrative example of this was the senior students' oral comprehensive exams. A majority of the seniors took a critical approach to the dominant Western hegemony inherent within the field and were able to offer a number of alternative perspectives in relation to a number of issues. Many students felt confident enough to confront unexamined assumptions and biases stated by faculty in their exam questions. While I may have been disappointed with my colleagues' lack of progress with regard to diversity in psychology, it has been extremely gratifying to witness such positive student development, for our students are the foundation of future change within the field.

Vic Muñoz: Displacements

I remember the day that I first felt that I was sharing my experiences with my psychology faculty colleagues in an authentic way. It was during one of our first meetings to discuss how we would write a proposal to present our diversity work to APA's Division 2 Society for the Teaching of Psychology. Jill agreed to write the first draft and she was very clear that she would write it from her perspective and that she would center Indigenous approaches to knowledge. We all agreed to that and I personally was looking forward to reading what Jill would write. It was exciting to me to have a new colleague who used language familiar to me and who didn't treat me as different or exotic, but instead as a person of color, like herself.

During this discussion I began to talk about some of my experiences with racism when my family lived in Boston. It was during the late 1970's and through 1991 that my mother lived in the South End of Boston. When she first moved there with my sisters and brother, it was mostly a Puerto Rican and African-American neighborhood. It still is diverse, but the gentrification of the 1980's did much to close the bodegas and local places and now the restaurants are fancy and rice and beans are hard to find. I began to tell my colleagues about how buildings were set on fire in our neighborhood so that landlords could remove low-income people and sell the buildings to developers who would then renovate these apartments into high end condos. White and privileged people, white gay men, and young urban professionals moved in oblivious to how their new condos had cost some people their lives and many their only homes. The local shelters were crowded with families and with people who were mentally ill from being homeless.

My family was evicted from our apartment to make a condo and had to move in with friends and relatives in Boston. My family was divided. As I started to tell them about this I felt very emotional. What I realize now as I try to recall my beginnings in transforming the curriculum was that for all the ten previous years at Wells I had many times offered my opinion on processes and events at the college, but I had never before offered my own life experiences. There had not been the space to talk about racism with my colleagues, ever. The space that opened up for me that day was both exciting and made me afraid. I didn't know what taking this road would bring forth. But I knew from my previous experiences that racism was not anything anyone who is white likes to talk about and I could see that was already happening among my white colleagues.

They didn't say anything to me directly about my life experiences, but instead they took up the argument about Western scientific methods being important and central. Yes, science was used in unethical ways, they argued, but that was not a good reason to, "Throw the baby out with the bath water." It was impossible for me to think of Western science as an innocent baby being washed by a nurturing caretaker in any metaphorical or literal sense. There is no comparable image or saying in Puerto Rican; it's hard for me to conceptualize throwing everything out. Instead, I thought about how we collect and try to integrate new ways and try to be flexible. Maybe that is the colonial mentality. I don't know. I have also read that the Taíno had flexibility as a cultural value; to incorporate new ways that suited them. But my colleagues seemed to refuse to center new ways, instead they talked as if they wanted diversity, but it had to be diversity done their way. As a queer faculty of color, I felt offended that they were

continuing to make my experience and ways of knowing marginal through their argumentation and advocacy of western science. They continued to set the terms of the discourse. I did not want to discuss western science, I wanted to discuss and learn about other ways of knowing. I already knew about western science and so did they. Why were we arguing about “the baby and the bath water?” I couldn’t help but ask myself this over and over.

Jill and I compared experiences and for the first time at Wells I had someone to talk with in psychology who understood what marginalized meant, who understood multicultural education, who was committed to teaching in ways that supported Indigenous approaches and social justice, and a world that had been getting smaller and smaller began to open up again. Psychology is the only major at the college where half the faculty are of color. That means two faculty are faculty of color and the other two are white. This creates a critical mass not just culturally, but since Jill and I share epistemological approaches it also creates a critical mass for new ways of constructing knowledge and for critical pedagogies based on the centering of subjugated knowledges. What this means is that we are a threat to the status quo, not just because we have a strong personal and professional alliance, but because we are working toward changing how knowledge is constructed through new methodologies and teaching new knowledges as central in psychology. This is more diversity than our colleagues had expected; it is a transformation of what counts as knowledge, what questions should be asked in research, who should be at the center of our curriculum, who benefits and how do we support social justice and feminist approaches. The space that I found opening was quickly shut down through defensiveness. Resistance to change was almost immediate because my experiences of racism, my methodological and pedagogical approaches contested the dominant paradigm and I was for the first time demanding equal space in the psychology curriculum.

Megan Correia: Discovering My True Self

A class that has influenced me the most here at Wells College is the Tutorial. This class started the fall semester of 2005 and contained five Caucasian students (all with different backgrounds and one non traditional student) and the four psychology faculty. The faculty made it known that the class was not to be graded or have structure. With the faculty taking away their power as an authority, the Tutorial was made as a place where we as students could feel comfortable and open talking about diversity and racial issues. The Tutorial has made me the person I am today. I never would have guessed that those first few weeks would change my entire outlook on life forever.

It took a few classes for the Tutorial to actually take shape. Since there were only five students it became rough at times because the group was so small and the topics so large. I found the Tutorial difficult. Though I enjoyed the readings by Janet Helms and Winona LaDuke, I was still uncomfortable with addressing issues of race and white privilege. Tackling these issues head on was something that I wasn’t used to and it made me feel uncomfortable. These feelings made me start thinking a lot about my white privilege and my prejudices. I remember becoming very angry because I was white. I found myself being silent during most of this Tutorial and I had to mentally push myself to say what I was thinking.

During the final weeks of class it was suggested that everyone in the group tell a story about race from their past. I found this exercise difficult because I could not think of one story to tell. I did tell a story and so did everyone else in our group. I think that by telling these stories from our pasts, it made us closer as a group. My feelings of being uncomfortable were slowly going away and I began to trust the group. I found myself wanting to go to class everyday because it was helping me discover myself. The Tutorial 2005 was an amazing journey and experience for me and I am glad that I was able to be apart of it.

When the Tutorial ended in December of 2005, we were all curious to see if the group would grow and become more diverse itself. I was spreading the word about the class and telling everyone my experience with hope that the class would grow in size. I was afraid of the new students coming even though I wanted them there. I felt this way because I knew I wouldn't be as comfortable with the new students as I was with the other four.

Spring semester 2006 Tutorial had grown from five students and four professors to fourteen students and three professors. It was exciting to see people of a different race in Tutorial, even though there were only four. I was upset not to see the two other psychology professors there. I did not ask nor do I understand why they stopped joining the Tutorial, but without them there, there were fewer people I could connect to, so once again I am silent.

The first couple of classes became very heated and I felt uncomfortable and frustrated during these conversations. There was one point when an older Caucasian non-traditional student was engaging in a difficult conversation with an African American student. I felt as though the non-traditional student was being attacked. That was not the case. I talked about that conversation with my advisor and told her how uncomfortable I was and how I wanted to leave the Tutorial.

Jill Hill brought me back to reality and made me realize that conversations that make you nervous, anxious and angry are what need to take place. These conversations are the hurdle to tackling diversity head on and if we cannot have them, then we are not going to get very far in our quest to discuss these issues. After I talked to Jill, I began to question myself again and the reasons for my defenses. Once again the Tutorial is helping me discover myself.

Fall 2006 Tutorial. This class has grown to an enormous size. This is our biggest Tutorial yet and I find myself becoming less afraid. This semester I'm no longer the spectator I spoke about above. I am now apart of the conversations and though it is terrifying at times, I am able to face my fears head on. Tutorial next semester should be our largest yet. We've grown from five students to over thirty. This group is very diverse from every aspect, race, gender and ethnicity. Seeing the class list grow to this size has opened my eyes and it's overwhelming to see so many new faces.

The Tutorial has become an important part of my psychology education. I don't think I would have the views I have today if it wasn't for this class. Now that the class is getting bigger and more and more people are bringing different issues to the table, it becomes hard at times to talk about those issues because they are on such a personal level, but as a group we get through them and we grow from them. Being apart of the conversations now is such an unexplainable feeling. I am proud to call myself a member of the Diversity Tutorial.

We all as students should be fortunate to have such as class and we should take advantage of it. If the students want diversity in their curriculum, it is there, it is in the Tutorial. However, I feel as though Tutorial is not enough and we as a student body must fight for diversity in our curriculum because it is real, it is there, it won't disappear and we need to become aware of it and explore it while we still have the chance.

Where Are We Going? Continuing the Journey of Curriculum Transformation

Recently at a dinner several colleagues of color began discussing the problems with the word, "diversity." The word itself is accepted by most people and few would be caught saying they are against "diversity." But in practice, diversity is difficult to get a handle on because it masks the more conflictive and emotional work of actually confronting and dismantling systems of oppression to make room for diversity. Using the term diversity to explain transformational work skips a fundamental step in the process; the actual making of space for diversity to emerge as a practice of freedom in education (Freire, 1993, Greene, 1998). We started talking about what words we could use to make the work of transformation plain. We came up with "total knowledge, democracy, and humanity." These words were meant to make clear that we are not demanding that our knowledges, pedagogies, and methodologies be tacked on to syllabi, but that the academy be Indigenized (Miheusah & Wilson, 2004) and that the marginalized have an equal place within and across all curriculum. This is what we call a *borderland/frontera* pedagogy (Anzaldúa, 1987) where we situate ourselves at the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, history, and decolonial struggles to transform education in ways that creates social justice instead of subjugation.

Perhaps this is an impossible task because the educational system is built to keep systems of oppression intact. But here we can take heart from anti-colonial education (Sefa Dei & Kempf, Eds., 2006). We can also take heart from Maori (L. Smith, 2002; Pihama, 2001; G. Smith, 2003) and Pakeha educators (Jones, 1999) in Aotearoa (New Zealand) who have taken on the project of bringing Maori education into the mainstream of New Zealand education. We can take heart in the decolonial project by Unsal (2006) who argues that the brain can be studied in ways that could give insight into neurobiological basis of racism in white subjects and illustrates how the brain is also a site of colonization.

While we take heart from these projects occurring around the world, here in our small corner, things do not seem to be going well. Perhaps it is the small size of the community that paradoxically imagines itself as intimate, but actuality constructs itself as exclusive of the other, resisting the stranger in town. Perhaps it is the national climate of hatred of the immigrant and the local and state political practice of violating treaties with the Cayuga Nation.

Just a few months ago here in the fall of 2006, a new administrator was hired into a new position, Director of Institutional Diversity. On the college's webpage it states that:

As the Director of Institutional Diversity at Wells College, Dr. Gilchrist envisions Wells becoming a leader on diversity issues locally, nationally, and internationally. Part of this vision entails creating an environment that fosters

awareness and life long learning of the skills and knowledge necessary for all to live effectively and peacefully in a pluralistic democracy, and as part of a global society. This includes having an understanding of cultures and groups different than one's own; developing the skills of dialogue, intercultural communication, and conflict resolution; and developing systems and structures that work for all people. (<http://www.wells.edu/whatsnew/wn2a.htm#gilchrist>)

We can take heart that the institution is moving toward acknowledging the problems of racism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, ageism, and lack of cultural competence on campus.

Still, in November 2006 the Curriculum Committee, in a not so subtle attack on our Tutorial, after issuing a one-page report titled, "Tutorials at Wells: Discussion Points," brought to the floor of the faculty for discussion, the problematics of tutorials. Included in this report was the following overview of the "problem:"

The tutorial offers a flexible mechanism for providing instruction on topics that may arise via student request, to meet special or last minute curricular needs, and/or for skill development (e.g., performing art). Attached is a summary of the tutorial offerings at Wells College from fall 2003 through fall 2006 (provided by Registrar Leybold). As the list bears out, the tutorials offered during these years are relatively small in number, small in class size, typically 1 credit hour, and generated primarily in the arts division, with occasional offerings in Japanese, math, computer science, psychology. Some of the most recent tutorial offerings in theater and psychology have been quite popular and registration has been "brisk". In the previous decade, a series of tutorials had been offered in the biological and chemical sciences as well. Informal canvassing suggests that faculty have a generally favorable impression of the tutorial as a flexible option; indeed, it has become a valuable and successful curricular tool, particularly in the arts division. The tutorial has not been without detractors at times, however. APPC requested a review of the tutorial offerings at Wells and for issues to be brought forward for discussion. Following are points that may warrant further discussion. (Tutorials at Wells: Discussion Points, Prepared for Academic Planning and Curriculum Committee, November 7, 2006)

In the "Discussion Points" criticisms made by the white faculty in psychology (one of the authors of the report is in the psychology department) were written as if these represented wide ranging concerns among many faculty. Especially relevant to this paper was the concern over "academic rigor" a perennial criticism of anti-racist, multicultural, feminist, and decolonial pedagogies by traditional faculty who may give lip service to "diversity" but in practice maintain the status quo:

Evaluation. It is currently possible for a tutorial to be offered that would never be approved through the more rigorous approval process, e.g., a letter graded course with no evaluation component. The potential exists for a 'loophole' for sidestepping checks on academic rigor or suitability of structural choices.

(Tutorials at Wells: Discussion Points, Prepared for Academic Planning and Curriculum Committee, November 7, 2006)

This political maneuvering served only to cause more division among faculty. The move was transparent to everyone. Still the climate was set for stalling curriculum development in transformative ways during the 2006 – 2007 academic year. Since it was obvious to us that this move was a direct attack on our course, we spoke with other faculty who did confirm that our responses to this report were correct. In essence, we were looking to know that we are not crazy, that indeed the Committee was taking aim at our course without explicitly making that clear. But it was clear. We wrote to and spoke with the Director of Institutional Diversity with our concerns.

In the Tutorial, which spring in 2007 has an enrollment of 34 students with three faculty, we will continue to reflect on how systems of oppression distort our lives and our humanity. It is very hard work. The tutorial is, “sacred space” and a different kind of “rigorous” pedagogy. Jill was asked by a student in the Tutorial to write about it for the student newspaper. The following is part of an article she wrote that was published in the student newspaper, *The Onyx*, March 14, 2007:

Thinking about the reasons we started the tutorial in the first place -- designating a safe space for psychology students and faculty to talk about difficult topics such as race, class, sexual orientation, culture, ethnicity, ability, etc. with each other in a more intimate and and authentic way -- and then seeing how well students have responded to it, I am really proud to say we've been quite successful in creating that safe space together. Given the size of the tutorial now, I think it's more of a challenge to create that safe intimate space, but certainly not impossible. We just have to think about it more consciously and consistently now.

One thing I've really become aware of in such an intense way is that students are hungry to confront these difficult dialogues with each other and with faculty. I think that's the magic of the tutorial -- the students' energy about these issues and their motivation and desire to get to a deeper understanding of each other. The tutorial fosters that process in a way no other class can, simply because of its "structure". We, the faculty, don't assign readings. We have a suggested reading list, but it is really up to the students to take on that responsibility. It's a different pedagogy, one that scares most professors because the students have the power to decide what they will do and how they will do it; the professors give up their power as much as they can. This pedagogy freaks out students as well, because instead of faculty infantilizing them by spoon-feeding content from some academic text (which Freire called the banking concept of education), we challenge students to take responsibility for their own learning in a very direct way. The latter is a critical pedagogy and most of the time, the outcome of such a pedagogy is student empowerment (one of the primary goals of the tutorial). In my experience, this is one of the best ways to address such sensitive areas like race, class, all the ones I listed above. The other faculty and I are there to facilitate that sacred process. I use the term "sacred" purposely because anytime a person makes themselves vulnerable in a way that reveals his/her/hir

(inter)personal imperfections to others, that's a sacred process and there is a lot of that in the tutorial. It's a special place, space, process, etc. that can't be replicated easily.

Finally, I would like to add that this past fall, Professor Muñoz and I proposed that the tutorial become a requirement for all psychology majors. This proposal was rejected by the rest of the faculty in the major without much thoughtful discussion or deliberation. I believe this decision was based in fear rather than any rational thought. People, especially those in power, have an incredibly difficult time accepting anything they perceive as threatening. I think many folks find the tutorial threatening for two main reasons: 1) the content areas covered in the tutorial (how many people in power do you know who want to examine their own racism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, etc. with a group of others?). In fact, some faculty have suggested that the tutorial may actually harm students because of the expectation that we all critically examine our attitudes in these sensitive areas together. My response to such an assertion is, take a look at the enrollment of the course and how it continues to grow. If students were being harmed in any way, no one would enroll in the tutorial. The second reason has to do with the success of the tutorial. There is no scarcity of envy within academic environments/departments. It is an unfortunate reality. Nonetheless, the tutorial has grown exponentially and I hope that trend continues. Perhaps then, other faculty will wake up to the fact that such experiences need to be a part of a "rigorous" academic curriculum. (*The Onyx*, March 14, 2007. Vol. XXX. Issue II).

We can then also take heart from the many students who courageously participate in ant-racist dialogue and examine white privilege. Take heart from the students of color who continue to survive within an institution that systematically denies their lived experiences and which instead, through policy and practice, encourages assimilation rather than transformation.

While we would all rather work in an educational community that is dialogical and democratic, perhaps displacements and making sacred spaces (Alexander, 2005) at the curricular margins are essential for transformative education. Perhaps this curriculum work can never be centered and we have to get comfortable with being oppositional and working at *las fronteras*. This is conflictive and unsettling; it is tense and contentious. It is a different sort of balance than the one conjured up by the word, "diversity" and has more to do with accessing knowledges in their wholeness and allowing *worldviews* and *wordviews* to emerge and take back the pedagogical land. This is profoundly democratic and does bring back humanity.

Where is this new place where we are heading? It is right here. Perhaps not the center we imagined, but an authentic place of opposition and liberatory education. In the words of Paula Gunn Allen (2000) : "we never go away even if we're always leaving because the only home is each other they've occupied the rest colonized it; an idea about ourselves is all we own."

References

- Alexander, M. J. (2005). *Pedagogies of crossing: Meditations on feminism, sexual politics, memory, and the sacred*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1999). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The new Mestiza* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Britzman, D. (1998). *Lost subjects, contested objects: Toward a psychoanalytic inquiry of learning*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2004). Aversive racism. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 36, pp. 1-51). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. L., Kawakami, K., & Hodson, G. (2002). Why can't we just get along? Interpersonal biases and interracial distrust. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 8, 88-102.
- Dovidio, J. F., Kawakami, K., & Gaertner, S. L. (2002). Implicit and explicit prejudice and interracial interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 62-68.
- Friere, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Greene, M. (1998). *The dialectic of freedom*. NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gunn Allen, P. (2000) In Sandoval, C. *Methodology of the oppressed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Helms, J. E. (1992). *A race is a nice thing to have: A guide to being a white person or understanding the white persons in your life*. Framingham, MA: Microtraining Associates, Inc.
- Jones, A. (1999). "Pedagogy by the oppressed: The limits of classroom dialogue." Paper presented at the AARE-NZARE Conference. School of Education, University of Auckland.
- Malcolm, D. (2005). *A whole new ball game: A close-up look at diversity, racism, sexism, affirmative action, cultural pluralism & the unfinished business remaining in twenty-first century America*. Fairfield, CT: Aslan Publishing.
- Mihesuah, D. A. and Wilson, A. C. (Eds.) 2004. *Indigenizing the academy: Transforming scholarship and empowering communities*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

- Muñoz, V. (2001). "Diversity's New Quest(ions)". In *The Express Summer 2001*. Aurora, NY: Wells College
- Pihama, L. (2001) 'Tihei Mauri Ora: Honouring Our Voices. Mana Wahine as a Kaupapa Maori Theoretical Framework'. Unpublished PhD, The University of Auckland. Retrieved from: <http://www.kaupapamaori.com/theory/5/>
- Sefa Dei, G., & Kempf, A. (2006). *Anti-colonialism and education: The politics of resistance*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- 'Smith, G. (2003) 'Indigenous Struggle for the Transformation of Education and Schooling'. Keynote Address to Alaskan Federation and Natives (AFN) Convention, Anchorage, Alaska. Retrieved from: <http://www.kaupapamaori.com/theory/5/>
- Smith Tuhiwai, L. 2002 [1999]. *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Sue, D. W. (2003). *Overcoming our racism: The journey to liberation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sue, D. W., Bingham, R. P., Porche-Burke, L., Vasquez, M. (1999). The diversification of psychology: A multicultural revolution. *American Psychologist*, 54, 1061-1069.
- Unsal, S. (2006). "Implicit racism and the brain: How neurobiology can inform an anti-colonial, anti-racist pedagogy." In Sefa Dei, G., & Kempf, A. (2006). *Anti-colonialism and education: The politics of resistance*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.