Integrating Feminist Theory, Pedagogy, and Praxis into Teacher Education

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Abstract
This article discusses suggestions for integrating feminist epistemology, theory, pedagogy, and praxis even more intentionally into existing U.S. teacher education curricula. The premise is that in light of recent 21st century women's empowerment movements, such ideas should be examined and integrated fully in justice-oriented teacher education programs. Supporting them with a review of the relevant literature, the author offers additions to existing frames within teacher education in U.S. programs. The author suggests emphasis on establishing authentic teacher voice through intentional pedagogy that incorporates feminism, through establishment of community, and through praxis and reflection. With these aspects firmly established in teacher education as essential to justice-oriented teacher education, the author advocates for counter-hegemonic conversations and storylines that encourage feminist voice and feminist praxis in teacher education.

Keywords
agency, education, feminism, justice-oriented education, praxis, teaching of English, teacher education, scholarship of teaching and learning

Introduction
In light of the accusations of sexual violence against women (VAW) and the #me too campaign reigned in late 2017 and carrying through to the most recent prosecution of high-profile sexual predators and a proliferation of racial profiling tragedies, U.S. citizens find themselves once again asking how inequality and blatant harassment and discrimination could be possible in the 21st century. And once again, many turn an intentional eye toward education, with statistics and studies about sexual violence in U.S. schools and analysis of textbooks and curriculum emerging in the hope and mandate to do better (Acosta et al., 2017; Albert Shanker Institute, 2015; Camera, 2018; Gist et al., 2018; Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018; Morris, 2016; Proulx et al., 2018; Sawchuk, 2018; Soloway, 2018; Sunnari & Rasanen, 2000; Wun, 2016). Unfortunately, a robust emphasis on the multiplicity of critical feminist epistemologies, theories, pedagogies, or praxis in U.S. teacher education fails to materialize to the extent necessary to effect change across the United States, despite advances and multiple calls from diverse arenas of feminist, critical, and womanist thought (Gist et al., 2018; Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018; Irby et al., 2002; Morris, 2016; Jones & Hughes, 2016b; Lensmire et al., 2013; Perry, 2016; Eustice, 2013). By analyzing the larger frames and content demands already in place in teacher education—and by utilizing these aspects to integrate feminist approaches with more intention—teacher educators can open up even more space for discussions that give students the capacity they need to build, the paradigms they need to examine, and the practical tools they need to address a real concern. In this way, teacher educators can acknowledge once again teaching as the “essential act” (Regan, 1990, p. 575), as “a contested place and space for personal and social transformation” (Gist et al., 2018), as a way of using lived experience to learn from and value all humanity and to instill in future generations what might become the hope for a better world.

Review of Literature: Relevant Intersections of Critical Feminism and Teacher Education

It is no small coincidence that the theorists who talk most forcefully about teaching and educating to provide such hope are those squarely aligned with feminism. Not only do feminists of all descriptions affirm the reality of what Michael Apple (2011) called the “absent presence in teacher’s work” (p. 9)—the fact that the large majority of teachers in K–12 schools are women—but also and most importantly they share common ends: both feminism and education “aim to empower all people and to provide opportunities for the full
expression of human potential” (Hollingsworth, 1997, p. 172). In order for that empowerment to be realized, K–12 teachers must work strategically to resist the status quo, and, as David et al. (1997) pointed out, “feminist approaches are not only analytical but also strategic—concerned with social justice, social change, and reflexivity” (p. 92; see also Apple, 2012). In that light, we have come to believe that examining preparation of preservice teachers through a feminist critical lens makes good sense.

**Teacher Education and Feminism(s): An Important Note**

As both Gist et al. (2018) and Hudson-Vassell et al. (2018) aptly and concisely described, I acknowledge here as well that any assumption that there is a singular, or singular definition of, feminist pedagogy is problematic. Indeed, there are multiple subjectivities and positions that ground the work, and divergent views and intersectionality are appropriate and vital to acknowledge. The theorists and researchers studied for this work variously draw from critical race theory, feminist theory, critical feminist theory, queer theory, intersectional feminist theory, and womanist theory. For a sample of the work I categorize as feminist pedagogy for clarity in writing, see Bondy et al. (2015); Briskin (2015); Brady and Dentith (2001); Closson et al. (2014); Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010); Gist et al. (2018); Herman and Kirkup (2017); hooks (1994); Hudson-Vassell et al. (2018); McCray (2015); Noddings (1988); Ohito (2018); Ollis (2017); Osei-Kofi (2018); White (2011); and Zembylas (2014). Perhaps a summary of what these perspectives bring is helpful before we consider what teacher preparation can integrate.

1. Multiple subjectivities and positions—by using a singular form instead of a plural to discuss feminist pedagogy, I am no less aware of the diversity of theories under this umbrella. As Briskin (2015) pointed out, “just as there are multiple feminisms, there are multiple feminist pedagogies” (p. 66). This multiplicity not only mirrors our world and the richness of the students for whom professors educate preservice teachers. It also represents divergent interpretations and interests—be they ontological, political, practical, theoretical, spiritual—all of which come into play in classrooms, the arena for teacher education wherein feminist teachers do not assume all classrooms nor all students will be alike. Teacher educators benefit from work that acknowledges intentionally what preservice teachers bring into this training. Acknowledgment of multiple subjectivities and positions is vital to transformative education. Doing so can intentionally help preservice teachers to unpack what will influence them as teachers and, in turn, what is influencing their students and the learning that will be created as a result of these teachers teaching their own students.

2. Intersectionality—in the same way, intersectionality plays a vital role in informing the kind of feminist pedagogy that has yet to be integrated fully into U.S. teacher education. Gist et al. (2018) and Hudson-Vassell et al. (2018), for example, advocated for an infusion of critical pedagogy that calls attention to the intersection of race, class, and gender, a pedagogy that drives and informs educational practices. Gist et al. (2018) described such an infusion as “activism in praxis” (p. 60), suggesting specifically an addition of liberatory race pedagogy or Black feminist pedagogy or Womanist pedagogy (see also Peters, 2015).

3. Improved focus and frame for critical race theory and the status of Black girls in education—with the education of Black girls at the center of feminist pedagogies today, concerns “are no longer buried due to feminist epistemologies that traditionally focused on the education of White girls and women or race-based epistemologies focused on educational barriers negatively affecting Black boys” (p. 62; see also Annamma et al., 2019; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Shim, 2018). Without essentializing the feminist pedagogies that speak to improved focus on addressing a broader array of interests and issues for the marginalized, Gist et al. (2018) offered a shortlist of this new umbrella of feminist pedagogy as (a) resisting hierarchy, (b) using experience as a resource, and (c) facilitating transformative learning.

What is gained when we consider these lenses and perspectives is, I hope, an engaged and critical frame that forces preservice teachers to accept, examine, and question their intersectionality and multidimensionality. Such examination is a precursor to create and facilitate transformative learning first for themselves and then for their students.

**Teacher Preparation and Feminist Pedagogy: Increased Need**

Teacher educators have learned through the years that the message about the ends of teacher preparation and teaching in general should be overt, and the only way to make them such is to equip K–12 teachers with the knowledge, background, and tools they will need to practice transformative pedagogy both inside and outside their classrooms. The role of the university in this equipping is no small one: “We must envision the university as a central site for revolutionary struggle, a site where we can work to educate for critical consciousness, where we can have a pedagogy of liberation” (hooks, 1993, p. 31). Instilling such a critical consciousness through this transformative pedagogy, especially in light of
the little exposure most college students have had to issues surrounding social justice and critical reflection (Samuels, 2014), is important but not easy. As U.S. teacher preparation programs teach methods classes, teacher educators can intentionally insert stepping stones—offering a way forward even more systematically than in decades past—toward instilling critical consciousness in future K–12 teachers.

Although prominent programs are known for incorporating feminist pedagogy broadly and well—with notable examples in programs at the University of Illinois (https://education.illinois.edu/), Teachers College Columbia (https://www.tc.columbia.edu/about/), and the University of Georgia (https://coe.uga.edu/about) to name a few—there is little doubt in light of current events and movements throughout the United States that a more robust insertion of these ideas is both timely and necessary across the majority of U.S. teacher education programs. The task of those educators involved in the creation of and syllabi for these programs is to access the resources and activities and to incorporate concepts and paradigms seamlessly but intentionally in the already demanding and, in some cases, overloaded course requirements as U.S. educational programs constrict budgets and witness shrinking numbers of students going into education that necessitate such constraints (see Rich et al., 2015). These constraints do not paint the entire picture, but combined with increased need and divisive social and cultural patterns, perhaps teacher education in the United States simply needs more and more fine-tuned incorporation of feminist pedagogies. Although this list is not intended to be exhaustive, it may highlight the need in teacher education that warrants a continued and increased integration of feminist pedagogies.

**Walking on Both Legs: Increased Need for Counter-Hegemony**

An overarching need for more and more targeted feminist theory and praxis in teacher education comes from the reality that Gramsci’s (1947) work is not over and is perhaps always evolving. The practice of developing ideas and discourse to challenge dominant assumptions, beliefs, and established patterns of behavior continues as the practice implies, and teacher education is an important arena in which to continue prioritizing and developing curricula that move these efforts forward. In too real a sense are daily reminders from the very privilege teacher educators are trying to disrupt. The desire to focus discussions on “challenges” of being privileged becomes particularly tough when the majority of participants identify as part of the advantaged group in question, for example when the majority of faculty are White discussing issues of race, male when addressing sexism, cisgender when engaging with transphobia, or able-bodied when taking up disability studies . . . it is imperative to try and move the dialogue in a direction that helps the group realize what is happening and how privilege is reproduced in the process being taken up. (p. 105)

Conversations around White privilege and increased counter-hegemony have either been attempted in teacher education or attempted but only to a point. A second arena of increased need for counter-hegemony arises an increased emphasis on VAW (Violence Against Women). Two additional areas of feminist pedagogy are cited: first, a radical feminist approach that challenges binaries in discussion about VAW, such as the binary of victim and perpetrator (Zembylas, 2014). Deconstructed binaries such as sex/gender, gay/straight, and male/female are likewise necessary to
enter the work in preservice education. Ollis (2017) further showed that critical pedagogy must be broken down to demystify and analyze “the complexities of difficult emotional knowledge” (p. 460). Similarly, McCusker (2017) asked teacher educators to allow more intentional conversations around the emotional labor of teaching, an often overlooked or even heavily dismissed area of teaching. Attention to increasing voice, both in preservice female teachers and in translating that to students, is also part of this increased need. Ollis (2017) asserted that “developing an explorative, fluid, nuanced approach that explores multiple subject positions and ‘truths’ remains a challenge” (p. 470). Calls in the research center around a demand

- for demonstrated movement in critical-mindedness and positioning pedagogy (Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018);
- for attention to microaggressions, insider-outsider placements, and explicit disregard for areas of critical scholarship (Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018);
- for greater attention on grading rubrics and classroom expectations in teacher education that link understanding of and tolerance for counter-hegemonic conversations (Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018);
- for resistance and retaliation for deficit frames that have crept into discourse of inclusion, diversity, and excellence (Burke, 2017; Irby et al., 2002);
- for challenge to “sentimentalist and moralistic discourses that often obscure inequality and justice” (Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018, p. 140);
- for liberatory and humanizing goals as artifacts (Gist et al., 2018; Roberts, 2019) of counter-hegemonic practices in teacher education.

These calls simply tell the teacher educators that, as far as they have come in reimagining education, they simply need more.

**Distance Education and Increased Need for Feminist Intersections**

Although a call for more counter-hegemonic readings, discussions, and activities in teacher education can certainly cover a great deal of ground, another specific context to which research extends a clarion call for increased need involves technology and the increased use of online and distance learning. In this context as well, the general principles already embedded in many teacher education programs certainly help. However, with increased use such as the emergency online distance learning of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as increased cultural tension around that same time period in U.S. history, comes increased need to consider specific areas where feminist pedagogy can be infused. Preservice teachers today receive much more information about digital learning than ever before, and the need to consider feminist perspectives in this increased venue for learning becomes evident. Although this field is just beginning to emerge as the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 spurred online educational options in almost every educational arena, two researchers can inform the need for more feminist praxis and pedagogy in this field. Herman and Kirkup (2017) asserted a need for combining feminist pedagogy and transactional distance theory. Reminding us that historically distance learning does not benefit women or minorities—not affording them the privilege of removing themselves from household or childcare responsibilities while they are learning and often setting up barriers that become logistically or financially burdensome—Herman and Kirkup (2017) suggested that there are positive benefits of distance education, particularly for equity and feminist ideals. They advocated integrating feminist thought into the curricular design of distance and online education to encourage those strategies as the newest forms of feminist pedagogy. Similarly, Burke (2017) considered the need for feminist examinations of online interfaces. This researcher examined online discussion boards, for example, as an arena for praxis, noting that “balancing the responsibility to nurture a free-flow of ideas with our responsibility to avoid being complicit in further victimizing vulnerable students seems to be an almost intractable challenge” (p. 432). Certainly as distance learning and digital learning moves forward into the third decade of the 21st century, the need for infusing feminist pedagogy and praxis into these arenas will become more and more pressing for preservice teachers.

**Status of African American Females and Increased Need for New Focus**

A third context that emerges in teacher education where researchers and practitioners see an increased need for feminism lies in the centering of African American females and the particular needs of their education as 21st century thought progresses. Many outlining this need point first to policy that feminist ideology and praxis can address. Gist et al. (2018) advocated for several changes that teachers can endorse and actively pursue, first around the structural and institutional racism in schools that affect African American students in general, but no less the girls whose needs are sometimes in the shadows of the more observable needs for African American youth in general. Grissom and Redding (2016) pointed out the statistics supporting the fact that teachers identify African American girls less for gifted and accelerated programs, and both White (2016) and Gist et al. (2018) suggested advocacy and education for preservice teachers around preventing communities of color from being reorganized and privately managed as a means of segregation and control. With similar concerns, Anamma et al. (2019) pointed out the data behind the fact that the school to prison nexus is just as true for African American female students as it is for males, both disproportionately represented, and
learning inequities often produced in the classroom in the following ways: a) their lived experiences are viewed as valuable knowledge sources; b) dominant technical pedagogical views in the classroom are decentered by repositioning them alongside alternative pedagogies; c) they develop fluency in reading the social world from the multiple standpoints such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and nationality; d) they are viewed as constructors of deep understandings and generators of knowledge; and e) they work to produce a critical change in their lives and the lives of others. (p. 83)

In short, teacher education and the feminist pursuits inside the discipline have come a long way, but needs abound, new needs arise, and the world inside the classroom and outside of it is not yet equitable and just. As the essential act, teaching and thus teacher education has a great deal more to do. The need to insert more—and more targeted—feminist practice and praxis in teacher education, then, continues to be well documented and much needed.

As any teacher educator can attest, never greater have been the competing demands on the priorities in the methods classrooms, along with the need for strategy and essential texts and questions that can get close to addressing these issues. I can attest that I am one of those teacher educators who struggle and who think deeply about how to accomplish any of these tasks with fidelity. What I have found helpful, nevertheless, are overarching principles and tools that I envision as stepping stones. Based on a review of both current and seminal literature and combined with my experience of more than 20 years working in teaching methods classes at three universities, I suggest that these steps might include

a. preparing preservice teachers to establish an authentic voice;
b. preparing them to establish their own brand of transformative pedagogy;
c. preparing them to establish a community of care, concern, and connection;
d. using all the above to promote praxis, challenge patriarchy, and enable systemic change in schooling and in society.

**Theoretical framework and contexts.** In simple terms, the will to incorporate more feminist theory, pedagogy, and praxis into U.S. teacher education programs is in large part there; the path to doing so efficiently, consistently, and effectively creates the need to explore what stepping stones between theory and practice can be put into place (Irby et al., 2002; Jones & Hughes, 2016a; Lawrence, 2016; Rich et al., 2015). In what follows, I review the existing literature, the most common best practice, and the practicality and utility of lessons learned at three universities in the Southeast and three distinguished teacher education programs in which I have taught and supervised for a combined 23 years in higher education to suggest ways forward as “stepping stones”—certainly not the only ways, but some research-verified and classroom-tested ways that show a trifecta of research, transformative pedagogy with best practice, and practical wisdom from lived experience that teacher preparation methods classes can be infused with a feminist lens.

**Positionality of the Researcher**

To put these ideas in context, the researcher’s background may be helpful. After 7 years of teaching English in a rural, college-town/capital-adjacent town in the Southeast—where the area boasted six universities including three historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), two research universities in the top 20 nationally, and a large women’s college—I began teaching methods classes in teaching English at the university level. Guided by an interpretivist theoretical approach (Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018), I realize the role that my identity plays in research, and I realize it is both situated by both history and culture; I am a White, straight female. I claim no objectivity and realize we all bring subjectivity into our interpretations, observations, and suggestions (Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018). After 23 years of teaching and supervising, I now teach and research at a women’s college in the
Southeast United States where as a full professor I coordinate the English licensure program for middle and high school English. In that 23 years, I have also taught the methods of teaching English classes at two coeducational research universities, both of which I also participated in supervision of student teachers and conducted research in teacher education. Although my longest teaching span in methods and supervision is at a women’s college where students take the class as undergraduates just prior to student teaching, the other university settings were coeducational and a mixture of graduate and undergraduate/postbaccalaureate students. Against this backdrop, perhaps it is important to point out that, although many of my students have been female, they have not all been so. My research in teacher education likewise is composed of coeducational groups. In that light, the suggestions here apply to preservice teachers of all genders, and indeed, I have found the same amount of interest and support for these ideas from both male and female students. Perhaps as a result of living in a pocket of the progressive South—or perhaps as a result of teaching thoughtful and well-read humanities majors—I can honestly say that both my suggestions and the feedback from these suggestions have been welcomed. In that context, I hope to add credibility and reliability to the stepping stones offered further.

**Stepping Stone 1: Preparing Teachers to Establish an Authentic Voice**

The first step in filling the tallest, highest order for teacher preparation is to prepare preservice teachers to find an authentic voice and to actualize that voice so that they in turn can gift their own students with such power. Researchers exploring the intersection of voice and social justice issues in education, like Hudson-Vassell et al. (2018) and Jones and Hughes (2016a), for example, pointed out that the first step in finding authentic voice for feminist praxis “is to help them become aware of the problematic nature of knowledge” (p. 173; see also Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011). Teachers should be made aware—through readings, through intentional and targeted discussion, and through meaningful activities—that knowledge is not neutral (Kincheloe, 2004) but has been “selected, constructed, distributed, and legitimated” (Glazer, 1991, p. 321), in many cases inside hierarchal structures and by those inside the dominant group as a means to keep hegemony in thought and action firmly in place (de Brun, 2016; Gist et al., 2018; Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018; Irby et al., 2002). In many cases, the “subjugated knowledge” (Collins, 1991, p. 168) of women and other groups outside the dominant paradigm has been silenced or replaced, and “feminine knowledge is constructed as inferior to male knowledge” (Singh, 1997, p. 114). As a direct result, the idea of merit is likewise “not a value-free or objective measure but is used by those who have succeeded because a particular interpretation of merit maintains their advantage” (Blackmore, 1993, pp. 38–39). Teachers must understand the controversy over what counts as knowledge to begin authenticating their own voices (Crabtree et al., 2009; Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018). Failure to understand the social construction of knowledge not only divides teachers against themselves, devaluing part of their personhood; it also perpetuates hegemony of thought when this segment of knowledge is unquestionably passed to the next generation, denying them of authentic voice as well.

When feminists examine what needs to be counted as knowledge to gain voice, the most prominent omission seems to be personal, lived experience (Acosta, 2015; Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018; Jones & Hughes, 2016a; Roberts, 2019; Soloway, 2018). As Weiler (1988) stated in a seminal essay, “feminist research is characterized by an emphasis on lived experience and the significance of everyday life” (p. 58). Gist et al. (2018) advanced this argument into the 21st century, and both agreed with duBois that “feminist scholars are engaged in an almost archeological endeavor—that of discovering and uncovering the actual facts of women’s lives and experiences, facts that have been hidden inaccessible, suppressed, distorted, misunderstood, and ignored” (in Weiler, 1988, p. 62). Gist et al. (2018) furthered the conversation to expand specifically for African American women, advocating that teachers using these approaches “cultivate safe and open classroom spaces (counterspaces) that allow for and center multiple and fluid experiences of Black girlhood in classroom discussion and learning communities” (p. 72). Gist et al. (2018) advocated as a result that teacher education programs urge teachers to “create opportunities for Black girls to create and share knowledge about their own lives and experiences through school and community-based Black girl listening sessions, conferences, and writing projects” (p. 73). With close attention paid to phenomenological approaches, feminist teacher educators and their teachers, then, can come to value what academics, historians, and other scholars many times have not.

That valuing of all experiences—the specific as well as the generalizable, the concrete and the abstract, the extraordinary and the mundane—allows teachers to examine all aspects of their lives and to see the value of every lived experience (Acosta, 2015; Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018; Lawrence, 2016; Mussack, 2017). In my own work with preservice teachers, for example, I have noticed that when preservice teachers describe shadowing experiences or observations of master teachers, they seem to write these observations and reflective journals more like police reports—completely disconnected from their lived experience in the classroom as observer or as students around them might be experiencing the lesson—than as moments that provide meaningful thought on their roles as a future teacher. To combat this tendency, perhaps preservice teachers could be invited to read much of the literature described above; as a collective, instructors and students could then use tools taken directly from autobiography to incorporate more lived experience into these journals. After doing just that in my methods classes, I ask the preservice teachers to
include questions such as “How did the room feel? Where were you sitting? Was it hot or cold, and how did you physically feel in the space?” Or “What sounds were predominant to you as you observed? How did that impact your experience?” Even questions like “Did you notice any smells? What did they make you think of? How did they impact your experience?” help preservice teachers situate themselves and their lived experience in such a way that it becomes harder for them to observe and absorb the experience without an increased connection. These smaller questions on lived experience typically lead to larger discussions:

What about sitting in the back of the class today makes you think about the decisions, the curriculum, the systemic predispositions or values that go into the creation of this classroom space? What equity or social justice issues do you notice from the back of the room that may not be as apparent when you are placed instead as the authority in the front of the room?

As students move from the first activity in this vein to the 10th or 13th, they begin noticing and analyzing completely different aspects, and the result has been much deeper conversations. This approach shares a bit of a research base in teacher education: Jones and Hughes (2016a), for example, conducted similar reflective journaling activities and discussions that prompt preservice experience to be defined more broadly and freely—and thus to be examined more, lived more, voiced more. Such a freedom gives access to voice because nothing is excluded; every experience has value, and lived experience in the small moments has the potential to transform the larger, more curricular, and paradigmatic ones.

Without the gift of lived experience, teachers have little to say that is truly their own; curriculum has little to say that has not been said hundreds of times; and children are given the message that they will not say (or to a large extent be) anything of value until they learn the shape of the molds and fit nicely into it. With the gift of lived experience, however, voice becomes liberatory instead of a place of struggle (hooks, 1993). As deSaxe (2014) argued in her support of intersectionality, acknowledging the lived experience for teachers creates “spaces to begin and renew vital conversations” (p. 550), equipping teachers to challenge yet another epistemological stance, that of binary oppositions and other modernist epistemologies that seek to devalue by comparison (Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018; see also McCusker, 2017; Ward-Randolph, 2012). The binary that deals most closely with lived experience is the split between public and private spheres that has for so long rendered at least one half of each person’s lived experience as devalued if not unspeakable. So pervasive is the campaign to deconstruct an emphasis on the mind/body split in education (Osei-Kofi, 2018) and to readmit to the public sphere what counts as knowledge that most consider it to be a common tenet, regardless of which brand of feminism is embraced. Glazer’s (1991) seminal work urged a postmodern position instead that

Feminists reject the idea that activities of the public arena should be the ones that are considered most valuable; they wish instead that everyone could value the power and potential of the lived experiences that people have claimed only in the private arena for so long. In her likewise important seminal work, Grumet (1988) proposed, in fact, that if the public/private split were shattered, relations between teacher and the parents might improve. Arguing that the public/private split has made teaching an unnatural act, one that does not nurture as it should because it has been so far removed from reproduction and thus recreation of children and society, Grumet suggested that rejecting such binary opposition would acknowledge the reproductive capacity of schooling as we “must make peace with the women who teach our children and acknowledge our solidarity with the mothers of other people’s children if we are going to reclaim the classroom as a place where we nurture children”(p. 179). Hudson-Vassell et al. (2018) brought this notion into a 21st century context when these researchers spoke in the context of diversity and inclusion and on the concept of “othermothering” pedagogy. In my teaching methods class—both the classes that are single gender and those that are coeducational—we address these suggestions not only with readings but also with frank discussions about work/life balance, about the multiple dimensions each student brings into the classroom, about equity and equality issues that affect instruction, and about our intentional efforts to live as wholly actualized human beings as teachers and as a result to teach the whole child in the high-touch classroom.

One avenue, for example, is through poetry, and much like Osei-Kofi’s (2018) use of Jamaica Kincaid’s “Girl,” I curate poetry that speaks to intersectionality. With these texts, the students and I explore the relationships between the individual and the structural, and early discussions serve as a backdrop when teachers first confront this intersectionality as student teachers in their placements. I seek to integrate these crucial elements and ideas into the lesson plans of each of my preservice teachers. These readings and discussions, as one might imagine, open up even more space to problematize and to think. Students report that, particularly because my methods classes center on teaching English, these intentional insertions are effective on multiple levels. The modern project of polarities are involved not only with the public/private but also in areas such as reason/intuition, objectivity/subjectivity, and theoretical/practical, all binaries that serve to value one kind of knowledge over the
other. For all these dualisms, Parker (1997) summarized the danger:

First, they take away the view that the mapping of identifiable categories of human beings on to any set of dichotomies such as these denies the variation within those categories, denies the holistic nature of humanity and carries with it all the risks known to be associated with stereotyping . . . [second], the value relation built into each binary pair of constructs tends to valorize the masculine and to define the feminine simply in terms of what is not masculine. Third . . . the dualisms are posed not as hypotheses to be investigated, or as ends of a continuum, but as self-evident truths with predictive and definitional significance. (p. 194)

When viewed in this light, the importance of challenging modern binaries with postmodern feminist thought cannot be overstated. Belenky et. al. (1986) solidified this connection of breaking down epistemological oppositions with authentic voice: “there is an impetus to try to deal with life, internal and external, in all its complexity. And [humans] want to develop a voice of their own to communicate to others their understanding of life’s complexity” (p. 137). The destruction of these dualisms not only would create more inclusive view of what counts as knowledge and what is valued as such; it would also help teachers authenticate what they know to be true.

When teachers understand the importance of the social construction of knowledge, the value of lived experience, and the danger of binary oppositions, they are much more equipped to value their own knowledge in its entirety and thus find their own voice. Although feminist theory is replete with such women’s ways, education still lags a bit behind. In their summer 2016 study, for example, Jones and Hughes cited several classic studies as proof that teacher education spends less time and energy as needed toward critical race theory, gender equality, and women’s issues. Stokes (2017), for example, drew a link between the allegations toward Harvey Weinstein and the #metoo campaign with statistics of sexual assault in schools and questions our readiness to tackle sexual VAW. University instructors can exhibit a valuing of women’s ways to preservice teachers by becoming educational theorists “who would talk about responsibility rather than accountability . . . about reproduction rather than production, about the relationship among eros, nurture, and schooling” (Grumet, 1988, p. 89). University instructors can encourage preservice teachers’ emerging voices by talking about education differently and by educating their students differently. Along with reading a good portion of Belenkey et al. and other seminal texts coming after it, preservice methods classes like my own can integrate intentional units or emphases to address these ideas. In one recent semester, for example, the “teaching literature” unit of my methods class involved reading nonfiction around the theme of the “woman warrior.” Because current, never-before-read content was a necessary addition for authentic conversations about our own literacy and teaching literature, the students could read nonfiction around a “ways of knowing” theme and integrate their reading of theory with the reading of memoir highlighting the unique perspectives and worldviews of women. The resulting discussions increased connectedness both with the theme of the class and with each of my preservice teachers, and I intentionally slowed the class at that point to make sure preservice teachers understood how such important principles were modeled for them so that they not only benefited in their own education but also were able to translate into a personal praxis in their future classrooms. Students generated specific strategies for themselves when that discussion was emphasized. Similarly, I began one semester with student choice in three or four texts around White privilege, and the results were similar to those surrounding the integration of women warrior. In addition, I invited an ethicist as a guest lecturer to strengthen the conversation; students expressed a higher level of satisfaction with this combined strategy over other efforts at courageous conversations in our class. The integration and intentionality made a difference, and as Belenky et al. (1986) aptly pointed out, such a difference can be seen when university instructors.

emphasize connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, and collaboration over debate; if they accord respect to and allow time for the knowledge that emerges from firsthand experience, if instead of imposing their own expectations and arbitrary requirements, they encourage students to evolve their own patterns of work based on the problems they are pursuing. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 229)

Similarly, I have also incorporated social/emotional intelligence and vulnerability research and the writings of Brene Brown (2018) in one of my methods classes. Much like the findings of Osei-Kofi (2018) and Blackmore (2010), I have also found that small incorporations of feminist pedagogies make an impact. In addition to reading one or two of Brown’s texts, for example, I also adapt Brown’s idea of permission slips to incorporate into my introductions to discussions some “rules of engagement” whereby students can share what it will take for them to share comfortably in a group and what one behavior or sentiment might shut it down for them. Going into these discussions with a resiliency and vulnerable mindset from the beginning of conversations allows space both for trust and transformation, and students express much more satisfaction with these discussions as a result. This result occurred, for example, in the conversations on White privilege, where the incorporation of permission slips and intentional ground rules for the conversation informed and guided the guest lecturer/discussant. Acknowledging such strategies will empower not only the teachers who find their voices but also the students they then encourage to do the same. Doing so intentionally with an emphasis on modeling good pedagogy also creates the possibility that preservice
will attempt some of the same in their student teaching placements and beginning years of teaching.

Other ways to encourage preservice teachers in finding their own voice involve reflection and resistance. Such resistance to ideas and actions of others, whether they be great or small, seems a key ingredient to developing a critical stance crucial for preservice teachers to understand how to teach for change. White (2016) and Acosta (2015) highlighted a 21st century need for such, for example, when they examine the status of African American teachers in education and highlight programs for pathways to teach for African American university students, particularly Black women. Loder-Jackson (2012) continued this work in an analysis of pre- and post-civil rights era activism in teaching of African American teachers. Weiler (1988) affirmed the importance of such resistance “because it highlights their ability as human agents to make meaning and to act in social situations” (p. 48).

Making meaning and thus obtaining voice, however, is not enough: “the question for women [for our purposes, teachers] is how the human ability to create meaning and resist an imposed ideology can be turned to praxis and social transformation” (Weiler, 1988, p. 50).

One avenue to do so might be through the teacher as reflective practitioner. Most preservice teachers feel completely overwhelmed with the necessary thoughts and actions surrounding teaching for the first year. Time for reflection seems a luxury at best and a daunting task at worst, as teachers become anxious about being their own critical worst enemy. Like most education professors, I infuse my teaching methods classes with a heavy dose of written reflections. In my almost three decades of working with preservice teachers, I have found three tools from the genre of autobiography that deepen these written reflections: written reflection as a focus on personal, lived experience; written reflection as storytelling with a purpose of revealing the self; and written reflection as an attempt at voice and agency (Roberts, 2019). In general, preservice teachers find the second tool—reflection as a storytelling (narrative) with the focus of revealing aspects of the teaching self and the personal self—to be the least intimidating and most natural prompt to begin reflection. The deeper and more practiced these reflective activities become, the more my students are generally ready to use the other autobiographical tools as well. My students consistently rate “reflective activities” as the one transformative tool they will use in their first year, and as teachers gather informally each year for a reunion, the event sometimes begins with this type of autobiographical reflection. Although reflection can become just as challenging as the initial action of teaching, university instructors can help preservice teachers by stressing the informal nature and the authentic reaction that should characterize such reflection. hooks (1993) even suggested poetry as a less daunting way to begin reflection. Through journals, free writes, whatever method is used, it is crucial for preservice teachers to reflect on their practice and thus find their voice, their passion, their unique style, and their meaning in their teaching.

Part of such critical reflection will inevitably involve a realization of how each preservice teacher is not only actualized in the profession but also situated in it; such realization can have profound effects on how each teacher finds, refines, and uses her voice. Through reflection, for example, Glazer (1991) suggested that “teachers learn to question unexamined assumptions related to their own cultural, biographical, and historical circumstances with a view to achieving closer congruence between their personal and professional lives” (p. 333). The hope for preservice teachers is that, through reflection, they can see themselves as multifaceted and multsituated human beings in a classroom teaching from that context (Acosta, 2015; Burke, 2017; Collins, 2013; Gist et al., 2018; Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018). Loder-Jackson (2012), McCray (2015), and Traister (2014) went further to emphasize the importance of the history of teachers as early feminists to challenge preservice teachers’ assumptions about their role (see also Crabtree et al., 2009). Preservice teachers might realize their own biases and worldviews through a reflective and critical examination of the history of the profession as well as their practices and interactions in the classroom. They might realize, as hooks (1993) stated, that we all have within us the capacity to dominate. They might realize that they address gender equity in their classes but not race or class—or, as 21st century researchers are now pointing out, possibly even the reverse. Reflection might create in teachers a personal transformation, a “remaking and reconstituting of ourselves so that we can be radical” (hooks, 1993, p. 32). It should be worth noting from my personal experience in the methods classroom, however, that such a transformation through a feminist approach to reflection will take a great deal of intention, time and spans of time, and practice. Although reflection has been (mis)used as simply a postmodern add-on to assignments, papers, and syllabi in recent educational practice, the component of a critical and continual reflection still holds the most promise to help teachers find their voices by finding their true selves as teacher practitioners. University instructors have the awesome responsibility of instilling a tendency toward reflective practice in the preservice teachers they endorse as situated but actualized agents for change.

If university instructors have enabled preservice teachers to find their own voice by acknowledging all kinds of knowledge—and knowing and by growing in that knowledge through resistance and reflection—the instructors might enable those teachers to embrace a long-omitted thinking that has real power for transforming the way they teach. Nel Noddings proclaimed long ago in Caring that “It is time for the voice of the mother to be heard in education” (in Belenky et al., 1986, p. 214), and Belenky et al. (1986) agreed that epistemologies not acknowledged loudly by teachers’ voices before have the power to reenvision and recreate in the students reproduced in schooling. What Belenky et al. (1986)
seemed to glean was a metaphor of teacher as midwife (p. 217), teachers—those of all genders—who, unlike banker-teachers, draw out lived experiences, knowledge, and ways of knowing of children instead of depositing the teachers’ knowledge in. Midwife teachers, thus, focus on the child’s knowledge and growth, not their own: “they contribute when needed, but it is always clear that the baby is not theirs but the student’s” (p. 218). Grumet (1988) expanded this thinking and power in Bitter Milk, conceptualizing the teacher as mediator between “the public and domestic oppositions” (p. xiv–xv), a role that invites “those who care for children in homes and schools to be the very agents of this transformation” (p. xv). Gist et al. (2018) echoed this call specifically for African American female students in the idea of other-mothering. Although it is a bit sobering to examine the fact that, 40 years later, we have not embraced these metaphors and values in teacher education, long ago realizing their implicit value, all-too-common 21st century headlines make it both necessary and hopeful to remember that change comes incrementally and is no less worthy a goal as we look back to move forward and inspire agents of transformation.

**Stepping Stone 2: Preparing Teachers to Establish Transformative Pedagogy**

It is this very transformation for which teachers strive, and a feminist analysis of teacher preparation would suggest that university instructors prepare their preservice teachers to establish their own transformative pedagogy. The origin of the concept was the paidagogos, “the Greek slave who used to escort his young charge on the walk from home to school” (Grumet, 1988, p. 164). Nevertheless, a feminist analysis of pedagogy would challenge teachers to do more than merely deliver instruction and reproduce existing practices and society; rather, teachers as intentional change agents could develop and utilize “transformative pedagogies” (Dillard, 1995) and “positional pedagogies” (Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018) that seek to create counter-hegemonic practices and critical consciousness. Researcher Omiunota Ukpokodu (2009) offered this concise definition of transformative pedagogy:

Transformative pedagogy is defined as an activist pedagogy combining the elements of constructivist and critical pedagogy that empowers students to examine critically their beliefs, values, and knowledge with the goal of developing a reflective knowledge base, an appreciation for multiple perspectives, and a sense of critical consciousness and agency. (p. 43)

Just as Jones and Hughes (2016a) shared, I have also found in my teaching that there is no substitute for intentional insertion of this expectation in methods classes centered on praxis; after reading and writing a bit about the concept, and most importantly after trying it out for the past two semesters of my student teaching/methods classes, I suggest that preservice teachers set one semester goal the semester prior to student teaching as one where preservice teachers articulate and act on one tailored, intentional, transformative pedagogy during their student teaching semester. My students’ projects and strategies vary, but I introduce some ideas to them that others have found helpful. One avenue, for example, might be concrete practices that view education as agency and participatory activities, like organizing a parent teacher association (PTA) or school library around liberatory practices like talking circles or voting drives (see Gist et al., 2018). Another example lies in the suggestion Gist et al. (2018) made, that preservice teachers study and target school policies and protocols that directly shape and affect the education of African American girls.

In this important endeavor of identifying and articulating one act of transformative pedagogy that is important for them and their students, K–12 teachers should be aware first of the problems and potential of race, class, gender, and schooling. Some preservice teachers may naively assume there is no problem in the ways that these issues are reproduced in schools. Preservice teachers, like some researchers, might never look beyond test scores to question, for example, the lower percentages of females in upper level courses or upper level career plans after graduation, or why fewer African American girls are supported and “pushed to teach” (Acosta, 2015); they may consider such inequities as a non-event (see Marshall, 2000). Before teachers can become intentional change agents through their pedagogy, they might consider that gender, class, and race “cannot be separated from the ways in which children are taught, schools have been organized, and curricula have been shaped” (Blackmore, 1993; see also Borshuk, 2017; Burke, 2017). They might consider that schools do indeed reproduce society and all its gender problems, specifically those of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity (Paechter, 2018). They might realize that such hegemony is perpetuated through the school’s gender regime of power relations, division of labor, patterns of emotion, and symbolization (Paechter, 2018).

Although these realizations may understandably come slowly to preservice teachers, and will require experience in the schools, I have found that direct discussion of issues of critical theory, pedagogy, and praxis in methods classes is essential. Perhaps showing preservice teachers specific examples or facts could help. Beginning with the most concrete of examples, preservice teachers might study, for example, how gender relations tie into how modern science is created, taught, and practiced (Aronson & Laughter, 2016); how technology and computing becomes as masculine activity in content and construction (Bailey, 2017; Herman & Kirkup, 2017; Niiranen, 2017); or how even behavior management is constructed as a power-ed and gendered activity (Marshall, 2000; Ollis, 2017; White, 2016; Wun, 2016). Preservice teachers could then examine how girls are funneled toward domestic occupations, the same areas of home and family that have historically been considered not worthy
of study (Traister, 2014; White, 2011). Looking at minority populations, for example, preservice teachers could consider how traditional sex roles in cultures still have the power to restrict minority girls’ career choices (Godsil et al., 2016). Taking the educational context in an even wider view, preservice teachers could see that, just beyond the classroom door, alarming numbers of children report sexual harassment. Stokes (2017), for example, reported that

sexual assault on children by other children in England and Wales have increased, up by 71% from 4603 in 2013-14 to 7866 in 2016-17 . . . [and that] reports of sexual offenses on school premises also increased . . . to 922 in 2016-17, including 225 rapes.

Although it hardly seems likely given the #metoo campaign, preservice teachers not convinced of the reality of the harassment could read the academic results of these instances, with girls not coming to school, not talking as much in class, finding it hard to pay attention, and so on (see also Rich et al., 2015). Preservice teachers must discuss the detrimental effects of harassment and indeed all reproduction of race/class/gender inequality in schools—as a microcosm of society in general—so that they must see that what we need in schools is not better methods of giving students (a limited) knowledge but more intentional transformative pedagogies that seek instead to empower all students with self-esteem, confidence because of appropriate knowledge and examination, and the potential to become agents for social justice themselves. Connell (1996) affirmed the power of schools to do just that:

It is clear that schools have a considerable capacity to make and remake gender . . . [the school system] has direct control over its own gender regimes, which have a considerable impact on the experience of children growing up; and it can set standards, pose questions, and supply knowledge for other spheres of life. (pp. 229–230)

The university instructor is in a perfect position at just the right time in teacher education programs to help preservice teachers become aware that schools and the teachers within them can accomplish what at times seems a Herculean task.

Stepping Stone 3: Paving the Way for Transformative Pedagogies: Care, Concern, Connection

Once preservice teachers are introduced to both the need and the potential of a transformative pedagogy that combines social justice concerns, critical theory, and intentional incorporation of feminist paradigms, they are prepared to study and create for themselves the praxis that will work in their own classrooms and with their own growing understanding, personality, and goals. Although university instructors cannot prepackage such a pedagogy for all preservice teachers, feminist thought provides a plethora of examples for transformative pedagogy that instructors and preservice teachers might explore together. Speaking directly of such methods classes, Jane Rowland Martin exhorted, “A teacher education for the late twentieth century United States which ignores the three C’s of care, concern and connection is at the peril of all of us, indeed of the earth itself” (qtd. in Regan, 1990, p. 572; see also Conklin, 2008). Martin’s first C, care, is one that many feminist authors (see Gholami & Tirri, 2012; Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018) noted as sorely needed in schools today. Perhaps the seminal feminist author whose work is pointed to most often on the subject of caring, however, is that of Nel Noddings. Noddings (1988) challenged teachers to go beyond service learning that might give students structured and thus less effective practice of caring. Rather, she envisioned,

In a classroom dedicated to caring, students are encouraged to support each other; opportunities for peer interaction are provided, and the quality of that interaction is as important (to both teacher and students) as the academic outcomes. Small group work may enhance achievement in mathematics, for example, and can also provide caring occasions. The object is to develop a caring community through modeling, dialogue, and practice. (p. 177)

Thus, Noddings offered specific practices that help instill a real climate of caring, one that pervades every part of the curriculum. Collins (2013) brought this idea into a 21st century context with her emphasis on incorporating Black feminist thought that highlights and celebrates “Black women’s meaning-making processes, their participation in dialogue to explore knowing, their enactment of a global, caring ethic, and their ethical/moral view of their own responsibility for positive social change” (in (Hudson-Vassell et al., 2018, p. 140)). In my own methods class, an ethic of care starts with the learning outcomes of the class—some brainstormed in a democratic activity with students—and extends into project-based learning, into social justice action research projects, and even into study breaks, extension activities, or common academic excursions that build community and promote unity and inclusion. Care, as Noddings asserted and as I seek to insert quite intentionally into teacher education, could characterize every interaction.

Opportunities for preservice teachers to practice caring for others in the class might lend themselves also to the development of more genuine concern. In some schools, especially with recent emphasis on test scores and rankings, time allotted to practice genuine concern seems antithetical. However, Robinson (2011) pointed to a feminist advocacy and activism for a more democratic education, one that might include diversity and global education to instill concern in children all over the world. Action research projects in my classes have worked in a similar way to increase an awareness of diversity, inclusion, and global awareness: In a class themed around banned books, for example, students create...
their own action research projects on a social justice topic that has educational impact. Combining these projects with readings and with an emphasis on feminist worldviews creates a next, more sophisticated layer for integrating democratic ideals.

To foster such ideal concern for and celebration of diversity and inclusion, students can also be offered several avenues and models for Rowland’s third “C,” connection. In their groundbreaking work, Belenky et al. (1986) discussed their ideas on “connected teaching” and emphasized that students and teachers have to go farther than merely listening, tolerance, and diversity in thought: To trust and connect “means not just to tolerate a variety of viewpoints . . . It means to try to connect, to enter into each student’s perspective” (p. 227). The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (2015) likewise echoed and emphasized connection as entering each other’s perspectives, arguing that, if connected, no one is decentered but the center is simply pivoted to each viewpoint. Curriculum theorists, rooted in a reaction against relativism, realized long ago that teachers do not have to relinquish all power and knowledge in their classrooms to practice feminist pedagogy. Instead, as many point out, that power becomes real when it is actualized, for example, in teachers creating pathways to success for students, from empowerment clubs to Black Women Educator pipelines (see Gist et al., 2018). McCarthy (2017) offered another example and advocated the 21st century case for democratically created learning outcomes, and I have similarly created a few project-based learning units with rubrics brainstormed in class and negotiated by students. I have found equally positive results, and students report that creating their own learning outcomes motivates them to care a bit more about the project and definitely increases their awareness of the larger outcomes and goals of the course. Expanding this idea in their discussion of connected teaching, Belenky et al. (1986) posited that “a connected teacher is not just another student; the role carries special responsibilities. It does not entail power over the students; however, it does carry authority, an authority based not on subordination but on cooperation” (p. 227). Such modeling of cooperation in feminist pedagogy will lead students to cooperate among themselves, as they work together on tasks and construct truth through consensus instead of conflict (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 2015).

Stepping Stone 4: Praxis, Patriarchy, and Paradigm Shifts

Feminist pedagogy certainly has the high aims of care, concern, and connection; if actualized in classroom practice and character, these aims might truly transform the students’ school experience. Furthermore, transformative feminist pedagogy also has the potential to reach far outside time and space of each preservice teacher’s classroom and create an attitude of counter-hegemony. Alluding to Friere and Gramsci, Weiler (1988) named counter-hegemony, in fact, as “the politically conscious work of teachers” (p. 31) and introduce several specific pedagogical practices that could create such a counter-hegemony in classrooms, practices that are still relevant and practiced widely today. The profundity of transformative practices revolves around valuing students’ experience and expanding classroom discourse, both of which I have witnessed in my own teaching, for example, with autobiographical tools to support the written reflections that preservice teachers write during their student teaching experiences (Roberts, 2019). Weiler (1988) summarized other feminist teachers who similarly expand discourse as they “comment directly on classroom interaction and attempt to create relationships within the class that challenge accepted behavior and attitudes of men and women” (p. 131). Gist et al. (2018) expanded these challenges by advocating that schools and teacher education programs “provide conscious-raising and critical professional development for teachers to combat color-blind and deficit understandings of Black youth” (p. 73).

In addition to counternarratives, preservice teachers could use an entire array of strategies by which they find their own voice. Projects and portfolios could always include a reflective element as well as additional opportunities to expand the stories, conundrums, oral histories, and queries the students bring with them. Many feminist scholars and practitioners add to the list of strategies ideas such as action research projects, cross-age tutoring, and popular media projects. Current pedagogy, indeed, is replete with practices and projects that elicit real-world response and value lived experience. The difference for feminist pedagogy is that, now, those practices have a purpose, one that encourages preservice teachers to consider deeply not only their stories but also how those stories, and indeed the student who tells them, are situated in this world and to critically examine that situation. In my own teaching methods class, I use an autobiographical tool that focuses students on just this kind of situating: Preservice and first-year teachers are asked to narrate a story about something that occurred that week in their teaching—the worst moment, the best moment, the most confusing conversation, the most hectic part of their week, and so on—and then problematize the narrative by asking a follow-up prompt. That prompt asks, for example,

What does the framing of this story—your selection of that particular story over another, what elements you left in or out, what people you describe with impact and which are secondary characters, etc.—say about you as a teacher? As a person?

With this second wave of examination, these teachers consider the worldviews, the binaries, the paradigms, and the values that inform what they do and how they experience it. This kind of broad, real-world response practiced over time seems to give them the mental space they need to examine
their own practices and beliefs and make way for more counter-hegemonic endeavors in their day-to-day teaching.

Another aspect of creating counter-hegemonic practices in a transformative feminist pedagogy deals, in fact, with how students and their teachers can discuss directly how they are situated in the world. Using an overtly direct route, feminist pedagogy frequently and frankly includes discussions of the intersections of race, class, and gender. In their study of classroom discussion on an experiment involving riding city buses, researchers and preservice methods teachers Jones and Hughes (2016a) found, for example, that “the object of analysis [in critical conversations in teacher education] was completely centered on race and constructions of race, and there was no space in the classroom for anyone to consider gender and the constant navigating women have to do” (p. 174) when preservice teachers were discussing an incident where a female student felt unsafe on the bus. They realized in this instance and others that, even though they considered their teaching methods classes to be justice-oriented, there were no storylines or classroom situations that ask preservice teachers to address gender in these critical conversations or to expand discourse around feminist issues. (Jones & Hughes, 2016b). To start these more expansive conversations, teachers might examine their own situatedness and present themselves openly and honestly as gendered subjects, gendered teachers in their classrooms (Niemtus, 2016). That kind of honesty can occur only when the teacher’s authentic voice has been actualized. Without university instructors preparing preservice teachers to establish such an authentic voice and such a critical consciousness within themselves, the practice of discussing race, class, and gender with students might remain miserably superficial and potentially detrimental.

Another potential detriment to such open discussions of the intersection of race, class, and gender might occur when such discussions are perceived by others as superfluous at best and at worst, unwarranted. Thus, for such discussion of race, class, and gender to become a permanent fixture in feminist pedagogy, “gender-inclusive curriculum and pedagogy has to be legitimized by other discourses” (Blackmore et al., 1993, p. 305; see also Soloway, 2018). Those realizations and discussions around power dynamics and discourses can be challenged in even the smallest of ways, as Osei-Kofi (2018) demonstrated with a challenge to have students introduce themselves not with the typical hierarchical roles (rank, discipline, etc.) but instead with personal rather than professional, nonhierarchical conversations around the origins of their names and so on. I recently tried just this type of introduction, and students afterward discussed how much trust we can build with those introductions, let alone how much more interesting they are and how much they contribute to really knowing each new student. Similarly, Hudson-Vassell et al. (2018) suggested the use of classroom “counterspaces” where ideas around misrecognition of Black youth, for example, could be a hegemonic activity. Room for discourse around the differences and definitions of work and care, freedom and choice, and authority and power has to be made for teacher education in real and sustainable ways—the world just is not ready for anyone, teachers and students included—to stop unpacking these concepts intentionally and intensely. As I taught preservice teachers during the span of the last 3 years, 2017 through 2020 offered far too many current events that quite sadly but unmistakably opened that kind of room and that intensity of discourse in my methods courses. Using extra readings and plenty of extra discussion, particularly at the all-women’s campus, many disciplines at the university capitalized on that opportunity as well. That kind of interdisciplinarity and inclusive focus creates an ideal that might be even more fully realized as feminist teachers experience success with opening discourse and legitimizing student experience one classroom at a time.

**Conclusion**

Just as in discussions concerning differentiating instruction for differences of all sorts, educators must realize that the pedagogical practice of incorporating the multitude of feminist ideals, epistemologies, theories, and praxis into preservice education might be a best, transformative tool toward counter-hegemony in the classroom. When we see the stories and lived experiences pouring through news outlets and social media, we can no longer look away and no longer close the classroom door to this devastating reality affecting more than half of our students. This article addresses the need to insert even more and more robust feminist epistemologies and pedagogies into U.S. teacher education programs. As the author and researcher, I offer both readings to incorporate into syllabi and course work in addition to practical experiences and activities to bring feminist paradigms for education to the forefront of the preservice teacher education classroom. It is a purposeful and intentional part not only of what I model but also of what I ask students to consider planning for and modeling themselves. Whenever appropriate, I offer examples and ideas from the literature and from my own teacher education practice at both single-sex and coeducational institutions in the Southeastern United States—ideas that can provide starters or discussion points for anyone interested in incorporating the suggested readings, themes, written reflections, or learning experiences. More importantly, perhaps, I frame the intentional emphasis on feminist pedagogy as four stepping stones to transforming teacher education into a major site of counter-hegemonic force and feminist ways of knowing, thinking, and teaching. These stepping stones are essentially principles or frames for teaching methods classes that can be applied in various ways and in various contexts. They include the following:

a. Preparing teachers to establish an authentic voice;
b. Preparing teachers to establish transformative pedagogy;
c. Establishing teaching as a gateway to community;
d. Intentionally inserting praxis and introducing paradigm shifts into teacher education.

Combined with direct discussions of race and class; with valuing student experience and expanding discourse; and with a curriculum that emphasizes care, concern, and connectedness, teachers might just be able to find the pedagogy for themselves and for their students with the power to transform.

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