Becoming a Woman of Color

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ABSTRACT

Social and biological scientists agree that race and ethnicity are social constructions, not biological categories (Wade, 2015). Social constructs, such as race, are fluid systems that take on different forms and nuances depending on social context (Anzaldúa, 1987). Living in two social contexts makes the distinct definitions of racial construction apparent. The author shares encounters with colleagues, students, and the local community that transformed her understanding of the construction of race in social contexts, her racial and ethnic identity, and her role as faculty in art education. Becoming a woman of color is a continual process of learning/understanding a social construction of race through and within varied social contexts.

Keywords: Identity, racial identity, ethnicity, art education, whiteness

Becoming a Woman of Color

I was born to Latin-American parents and raised in Miami, Florida. In 2014, I moved to Baltimore, Maryland, a mid-sized urban city, to teach at a well-known art college. Living in this new city created experiences, or encounters, with colleagues, students, and the local community that transformed (and continue to transform) my understanding of the construction of race in social contexts, my own racial and ethnic identity, and my role as faculty in art education. Becoming transforms my experience through purposeful perception and reflection. Becoming a Woman of Color is a continual process of learning/understanding a social construction of race through which locals view my racial and ethnic identity, while I simultaneously maintain a social construction of my racial and ethnic identity developed in my home context.

Social and biological scientists agree that race and ethnicity are social constructions, not biological categories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Wade, 2015). Social constructs are fluid systems that take on different forms and nuances depending on social context (Anzaldúa, 1987). Living in South Florida and then the mid-Atlantic region of the

United States makes apparent the regional delineation of race, namely the different ways that White and Black are defined. In Miami, I am considered White and in the mid-Atlantic I am considered a "person of color." Despite the fluidity of definitions, race and ethnic constructions are experienced as real (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Wade, 2015) and well-defined in social institutions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), such as schools.

Currently, the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) treats race and Hispanic origin as two separate and distinct concepts. People who are Hispanic may be of any race. People in each race group may be either Hispanic or Not Hispanic. Each person has two attributes, their race (or races) and whether or not they are Hispanic. The terms White and Hispanic are my personal identities chosen from the constructed terms provided on Federal, State, and institutional questionnaires, while Woman of Color is the term that describes my identity in a new context.

In writing, I seek to better understand my own personal and professional identities in relation to racialization (Kraehe, 2015) and share my story to bridge an understanding (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) of the social construction of race. Further, writing serves to keep intact my shifting and overlapping identities and integrity (Anzaldúa, 1987). Therefore, in this paper, I share my lived experience (Van Manen, 2018) of entering a social structure different from the one I lived in for most of my life and how I was perceived racially and ethnically different in this context. I experienced an unexpected identity crisis upon entering my new context: I now lived in a majority Black city with a small Hispanic population, and worked alongside a majority White faculty. In no space in this new context was I perceived to be a White-Hispanic, as I had considered myself in Miami. I was a Woman of Color, and slowly, over time, I came to understand what that meant to me and my role as faculty in Art Education.

I share my experience of feeling and seeing race as a social construction because my experiences have resounded with scholars, students, and practitioners, and I hope to build an understanding of how race is socially mediated, specifically for my pre-service teachers, who I teach and mentor. Teachers of all races benefit from understanding the experience of race as a social construct and its impact on identity and they must consider implications for learning and teaching.

The nature of becoming is ever-evolving, changing, and growing in response to lived experiences (Van Manen, 2014). Lived experience has "temporal structure: it can never be grasped in its immediate manifestation but only reflectively as part of the present" (Van Manen, 1994, p. 36). What I learn today will inform how I interpret the past. I have learned to hold on to the ambiguity that compels me to write, but at times blocks me (Anzaldúa, 1987). For example, in my early stages of becoming, my racial and ethnic identity felt divided between two cultures. As a consequence, I stopped writing for a few months. But as Anzaldúa (1987) theorized, the resistance to knowing is followed by increments of consciousness, kicking out old boundaries of the self, and, for me, has brought about an integrated, multifaceted identity. The following are my early reflections on what it means to become a Woman of Color.

Knowing

> *Knowing is painful because after it happens, I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the person I was before*.
>
> Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 70

My process of becoming a Woman of Color draws from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) theorizing on becoming and Anzaldúa's (1987) Borderlands theory. Deleuze and Guattari's becoming frames the process through which I perceive, notice, and give meaning to particular lived experiences of living in my new city that highlight a contrast with my racial/ethnic self-identity. Borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) helps to frame the social context, Miami, Florida, where I developed my White-Hispanic racial/ethnic identity and consider implications of living in other social systems.

Becoming

Life is a series of events that, strung together, are perceived as the actual world of experience (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari theorized that the changing lifeworld is imperceptible unless we notice (Colebrook, 2002). Noticing requires a purposeful stepping away from the flow of experiences in order to carefully examine them. During these points of perception, or noticing, feeling emotions, and reactions give meaning to experience. Life(-experience) becomes through these different points of perception to create meaning. Becoming is the process of perception and its resulting transformation

(Colebrook, 2002). It occurs as a consistent transformation over time, producing phenomenological knowledge from experience (Van Manen, 2014). The self as a changing perceiver in the experience of life becomes.

Borderlands

Becoming a woman of color refers to my process of perception and transformation in a social context, where my self-identity developed as a Hispanic, White woman in a borderland is different from the identity of Woman of Color in a social context outside the borderland. Growing up and teaching art in Miami, Florida, I lived in a borderland (Anzaldúa, 1987). Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory (Anzaldúa, 1987). Miami serves as a nexus, economically and socio-politically connecting the United States to Latin America and Europe. Anzaldúa's (1987) theorizing applies to Miami, as a border, which is susceptible to hybridity, or mezcla, of multiple cultures. Inhabitants are not fully from one culture and, on the other hand, are not fully from another culture; they exist in a third space (Bhabha, 1994). Hyphenated-hybrids such as myself, a Cuban-Ecuadorian-American, are commonplace in the Miami borderland.

People learn the reality that their culture communicates (Anzaldúa, 1987), and when my experience growing up in a Hispanic, borderland contrasted with the experience of living in a majority Black city, while working at a predominantly White college, I experienced feelings of alienation as I learned, accepted, assimilated, but then resisted the precepts of my new culture (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Processes of Becoming

In order to examine my experiences growing up in a borderland and moving to a new social structure, I used narrative research as the method of inquiry (Richardson, 2005) and analysis (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009), and this method served as the vehicle to share my experiences as an autoethnography (Anderson, 2014). Through autoethnography I connect my personal experiences to larger issues in society (Jones, 2005). The methodology allowed me to situate myself into a new culture (Anderson, 2014) through taking myself "deeper inside [my]self and ultimately out again" (Jones, 2005, p. 765). Autoethnography was appropriate for my research as it provides a means to examine myself and my new environment through "a self-

narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts" (Spry, 2001 as cited in Jones 2005, p.765). The methodology also allowed me to present my experience as a means for identifying the subjective nature of identity and cultural interpretation (Jones, 2005).

Writing to Become

> *To be a writer, I have to trust and believe in myself as a speaker, as a voice for the images.*
>
> Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 95

Writing served as the structure through which I stepped aside from the flow of life-experience to become (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). When particular encounters, or sensible events, challenged my way of thinking about my racial and ethnic identity, I sat down and wrote a rich, descriptive narrative (Anderson, 2014; Geertz, 1973) of the encounter that evening or the following day. I used writing as a method of inquiry to discover and learn something new (Richardson, 2005) because writing is one way to tell stories (Anderson, 2014) and interpret the past (Jones, 2005). I refrained from sharing the encounter with others before I had time to describe and reflect on the experience in writing. This way, I captured my own critical reflections before allowing the interpretations of others to add to the analysis of my experience, which was an important part of my reflection process. Afterwards, I shared experiences with new colleagues in order to enrich my initial analysis of my experience.

I wrote personal narratives as critical reflections to document details and vivid descriptions of cultural phenomena (Anderson, 2014). I conducted written preliminary analysis of themes immediately after I documented the facts of the encounters, but memory of the encounters resonated over time as I made sense of the implications for my racial/ethnic identity in a new context. The narratives produced next serve as social products reflecting experience and an embodiment of inner life (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009).

Encounters, Sensible Events

Deleuze described sensible events, or events that are sensed, are those that spark becoming (Colebrook, 2002). Anzaldúa (1987) refers to such encounters as images that bridge emotion with conscious knowledge. She said

An image is a bridge
Between evoked emotion
And conscious knowledge.
Words are the cables that hold up that bridge. (p. 91)

The experience of writing about moments, and creating images to bring emotions to conscious knowledge, assisted me in making sense of these encounters, which enriched the development of my overlapping and intersecting identities. What follows is a series of images that, together, bridge my experience shifting and reconciling living in two social constructs of race and ethnicity.

Growing up in Miami, Florida

Growing up in Miami, Florida until the age of 18, I lived within the dominant paradigm and precepts of that culture (Anzaldúa, 1987). Miami, Florida is a border town (Anzaldúa, 1987). While fully part of the United States, it is located on the cusp of the United States and the Caribbean and South America. Multiple languages and cultures overlap, mix, blend in this third space (Bhabha, 1994) to create a local Miami consciousness, which include: A popular American supermarket chain that sells pastelitos de guayaba (Guava pastries) and Cafe Cubano (Cuban style espresso) at hundreds of locations in South Florida (Publix, 2018); numerous art and cultural museums with Latin American and Caribbean foci; multiple bilingual radio stations that play both English and Spanish-language music (Top 40 alongside Reggaeton and Salsa music); and bilingual politicians.

I was born and raised in this border town, where 65% of the population identifies as Hispanic, as I do (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). I attended my neighborhood high school with 92% Hispanic students, where most students regularly spoke two languages, winding in and out of Spanish and English when one language didn't accurately represent something we wanted to express. "Do you have a liga?" was used to ask for a hairband to tie back long hair in this hot, humid city, where Guendis stands for Wendy's, Faisboo, means Facebook and even McDonald's sells cafecito cubano. Miamians have created their own hybrid dialect capable of communicating the "realities true to themselves-A language with terms that are neither espanol ni inglés but both" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77). One can easily go an entire day speaking only Spanish while completing daily activities: grocery shopping, visiting the pharmacy, fueling the car, and visiting a doctor.

In Miami, Hispanics generally identify in multiple ways. We may identify as Black and/or White. Hispanics may also identify with Native American ancestry from South America and/or Caribbean Islands. The parameters for what is considered White in Miami is broader than in my new context. For example, in Miami I am considered White even though I am triguena (wheat color). Nationality adds an additional significant identity marker, which attributes its own set of cultural influences. We identified not only as being Black and/or White, Hispanic or Latina/Latino, but added specificity about the origin of our hispanidad: Cuban, Venezuelan, Dominican, Honduran, El Salvadoran, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Peruano, Panamanian, Brazilian, Nicaraguan, Guatemalan, guatemalteco, Haitian, Costa Rican, costariqueño. Additionally, this bordertown created the opportunity for people from various cultures to meet and have children creating many sorts of hybrid identities (Anzaldúa, 1987). In Miami, we hyphenate identities into what I would call hyphenated-hybrid identities. A few examples are Cuban-Ecuadorian (me), Puerto Rican-Dominican, Columbian-Peruvian, and Cuban-Argentinian-Peruvian-Russian.

Straddling the Border

Hyphenated-hybrids have at least two cultural influences that impact identity to varying degrees. In my case, my mother was born in Cuba, my father in Ecuador, and I was born in the United States. I spent a lot of time with my Cuban exile grandparents and great-grandparents on evenings and weekends while my mom earned her Bachelor's degree. We roast a pig for Christmas, greet everyone in the room with a kiss on the cheek, celebrate Quinces and/or Sweet Sixteen, and pin azabaches on babies clothing to ward off the evil eye. I learned English with Sesame Street and later watched America's first bilingual situation comedy, about a Cuban exile family, ¿ Que Pasa USA? (2019) on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS).

My identity is a synthesis of cultures (Anzaldúa, 1987). Anzaldúa (1987) considers hyphenating Cuban-Ecuadorian-American a cop out, rightfully, pointing out American as the noun and Cuban-Ecuadorian as adjective. However, for me, I understand hyphenating as clarifying multiple influences on identity to varied degrees. Although my hyphenated hybrid identity is Cuban-Ecuadorian, the Cuban culture and Cuban dialect is a more powerful influence on my identity than my Ecuadorian roots. I regularly cook traditional Cuban meals, which include picadillo, arroz con pollo, fricase, bacalao, frijoles negros,

garbanzos fritos, and puerco asado. My American influence compels me to pair my Cuban meals with a sensible salad that substitutes lettuce for aguacate and cebolla (avocado and onion), omitting the classic pairing of main dishes with white rice and sweet plantains. The multicultural influence in Miami as a bordertown makes available foods such as: Nicaraguan Gallo Pinto, Colombian banana-leaf-wrapped tamales, Argentinian Choripan, Puerto Rican Mofongo, and many Argentine butchers who provide prime skirt steak, enjoyed as Churrasco a la parilla.

I taught art in the large public-school system in this third space for nearly 10 years. I taught at my high school alma mater and I shared an understanding of my students' intersections of race, ethnicity, and cultural customs, which helped me to facilitate learning in the visual arts. I was cognizant of the varied ethnicities of my students and their customs, worldviews, and approaches to learning. It was commonplace in this third space to ask questions about people's customs to better understand their ways of being.

Being Hispanic or Latino in this environment was customary, regular, anticipated. I had Hispanic teachers and principals and colleagues, of varied nationalities, throughout my K-12 education and profession. I could look to elected officials and see Hispanic women in positions of leadership.

I occupied several positions of privilege in Miami. Primarily, belonging to the dominant White-Hispanic population provided a sense of belonging and shared understanding which created networks and opportunities for navigating systems (e.g. education, employment, medicine). My birth in the United States privileged me among the largely immigrant community. The maternal side of my family immigrated as political refugees the 1960s. Cubans not only integrated into the Miami culture, but as early inhabitants to a growing population, they shaped culture and established powerful networks as the city expanded (although my mother would challenge that entering high school, as an English language learner was a privileged experience among her peers). Despite the trauma of exile from her home country, my mom earned an undergraduate degree and worked as a business administrator.

Where are you from?

Many times, throughout my life, when I am outside of Miami, people have asked me, "Where are you from?" I've learned that my

birthplace, Miami, Florida is not a sufficient answer. People want to know where my triguena (wheat) skin originates. So I usually answer, "I was born and raised in Miami, Florida and my mom was born in Cuba and my dad is from Ecuador." A mouthful, I know, but that seems to assuage the curiosity, which I am usually happy to share. Sometimes I go into the details: that they came to the US in the 1960's, to Miami and New York, respectively, and met in South Florida. I like for people to know that I am American and Hispanic.

My Cuban born maternal grandmother, Mima, helped develop my proud bilingual Hispanic-American identity. "Tu eres Americana," Mima would tell and remind me over the years. "You were born here and you are fully American and you should be proud of being born in this country." She taught me to recognize the value of my ability to clearly speak two languages. She encouraged me to develop my abilities in reading and writing (not only speaking) Spanish so that I could communicate with various populations of people. Being American and Hispanic was the way I was raised along with others in this bordertown.

The Miami borderland culture informed my beliefs and the version of reality that it communicated to me (Anzaldúa, 1987). Predefined concepts, such as Hispanics in power, hyphenated-hybrid identities, bilingualism, asking others about their customs, and Hispanic-Americans, existed as unquestionable and unchallengeable (Anzaldúa, 1987). As a Hispanic-American in my neighborhood, I lived in the majority. I was racially insulated. I did not see myself as racialized, because I was in the dominant culture (DiAngelo, 2011).

Becoming

Anzaldúa (1987) theorized that a Woman of Color experiences unsettlement "within her inner life or her Self...She can't respond" (p. 42) when alienated from her mother culture. There are encounters that silence me, or make me unsure how to respond, or in retrospect, question my response. Becoming a Woman of Color includes these processes of making sense of the spaces between the different worlds I inhabit.

Moving North. After earning my doctorate, I accepted a faculty position at an art college in the eastern region of the United States. The following demographics provide some context to the two cities that have brought my attention to construction of race in social contexts. The racial and ethnic origin demographics differences

between my new city and Miami are notably different. The population in Miami is White (74%) and Black (18%), and Hispanic (65%). While the population in my new location is White (29%) Black (64%) Hispanic (4%). The population of White, Hispanics in Miami is 58% and in my new city is 2%. The statistics make it clear, racially and ethnically, I no longer live in the majority.

Attending the Women of Color lunch. In the second month in my new role as a college professor, I received an email invitation to the Women of Color Lunch for faculty and students, and I was surprised. First, I was surprised that I had been identified as a Woman of Color, and second that Women of Color had an associated meeting. I had never attended a meeting specifically for people of color in Miami. I wondered why I was identified as a Woman of Color. Was it my curls, my tanned skin? I wondered: What does "Women of Color" mean? Why should I go?

I accepted the invitation and attended the event because I wanted to learn more about my new context, and thus new label. At lunch, I faced the reality that I was one of less than a handful of Latina-identifying professors at the school. Our school conducted a diversity audit (Diversity Audit, 2016), which revealed to me that only one full-time Hispanic person was hired between 2012 and 2016 (p. 21). Further, the number of Hispanic identifying full time faculty was one. That must be me. Including our part time faculty and staff: Fifty-one percent identified as White; eight percent Black; three percent Asian; two percent identified as more than one race; one percent Hispanic; and 35 percent did not specify.

At the lunch roundtable, I fell silent when I did not know how to respond to young women lamenting that they did not see people who looked like them reflected in the faculty or in the historical and contemporary artwork they studied. The students shared that class critiques of their work focused on formal qualities rather than the concepts they addressed. I was surprised to learn that a few professors never asked the young women of color what their work was about. I realized that even the simple act of being visible and listening to the students was helpful for them. I began to make meaning of the term, "Women of Color." In this context, it started to gain the meaning "not white." In this context, my *hispanidad* put me in the category me as "not white," racialized, and therefore a "woman of color."

At the roundtable, I met a group of students from South Florida, who felt uneasy that a professor identified them as Spanish speakers and asked them, in front of the class, to speak in Spanish. I remembered my grandmother's lessons, and reassured them that being bilingual is an asset and a source of pride. It was okay to refuse the request to speak Spanish. I have learned that people of color "carry the burden of having to choose between tacitly participating in their marginalization or actively resisting racist ideologies" (Evans & Moore, 2015, p. 542). The luncheon provided a space for us to share experiences remaining silent, resisting others' construction of our identity, while affirming the ways in which we've responded to people's demands.

I found that spaces such as the Women of Color lunch provided me a context for making sense of my becoming alongside faculty, staff, and young women at my school. My trusted colleagues not only listened to my stories, but we challenged essentialist notions of identity, race, and ethnicity. Importantly, I connected with women who also lived varied racial identities dependent on context.

For me, becoming a Woman of Color means feeling belonging in a social network of people of color committed to supporting each other through friendship, collegiality, and sharing experiences. My new social network knew the types of challenges, prejudices, and stereotypes that I would encounter before I had even recognized them and offered me a sense of belonging and kinship in a way that I had not experienced before.

You don't look American. An encounter, or sensible event, with a cobbler in my new city further helped me to reflect on my experience from daily life and become a Woman of Color. I arrived at the counter to pick up a purse that I had dropped off that needed stitching. A jolly, White man wearing a polish stained denim apron approached me with a big smile, seemingly eager to speak with me. He said, "I wanted to meet you because I saw your name on the ticket. It looks Brazilian," He spelled out each letter, "P-e-r-e-i-r-a, and I look at you, and

You don't look American.

What? I was surprised at the statement. Then, I grinned and chuckled a little because it was such an unusual way for someone to inquire about my ethnicity. People usually just ask, "Where are you from?" Nevertheless, I understood the inquiry at the root of his approach.

My grin turned into a smile and I said,

Well, yes. I AM American.

"I was born and raised in Miami, Florida." I continued with my spiel about my parents' birthplaces, and added, "The name is Portuguese. There are many Pereiras in Brazil and a city in Colombia named Pereira." We continued on with a lovely conversation that became tangential to our initial discussion about my nationality. But at the end, I left that cobbler shop wondering: *What do Americans look like if they don't look like me?*

The encounter with the cobbler revealed how my perceived race and ethnicity was associated with otherness or foreignness. He did not consider my name or my looks to be American. I quickly and automatically resisted his (re)construction of my identity. I tried not to be offended, since his intent seemed to come from a place of friendly curiosity and interest, however, his intent taught me that I am perceived as other in my new context. I no longer lived in the dominant ethnic group and the encounter injured my proud Hispanic-American identity.

Checking the box. Most Cuban exiles in the 1960's were White in the context of their homeland (Torres, 2001). On all of my state standardized tests, college and employment applications, I checked White and Hispanic. Similarly, on my job application to college where I now work, I selected White and Hispanic. In the second semester of my employment, an administrative assistant who was filing a report on the demographics of the faculty asked me to choose one checkbox: White, Black, Hispanic, Two or more races, Native American or Asian. I explained that all my life I had selected two checkboxes White and Hispanic. I was confused by having to choose one. So, I asked to review the requirements for the report. She was right, I could only check one box for Ethnicity and Race. However, the fine print said "Hispanic/Latino of ANY race" (emphasis added). That was it! That was my checkbox.

A trusted colleague who attended the Woman of Color lunch with me earlier that year observed this interaction. She was surprised by the way I self-identified. She communicated that sometimes she had been mis-categorized as White on the same form. She wondered if I too had been misidentified as White. She shared that she checked "Other" or "Two or more races" and also explained that another one of our Hispanic colleagues also checked "Two or more races" on the forms.

At that moment, I could simply reiterate that I'd always identified as White and Hispanic.
However, it was clear that White was not the way I was perceived in this context. The way that I identified conflicted with how I was perceived racially. I lamented the ability to define myself the way I had in Miami. We asked "de donde eres," or "where are you from," which allowed others the space to identify themselves. However, in this context, I was pre-defined. I began to understand that Whiteness looked different here than it did in Miami. Torres (2001) points out, "Cubans [refugees in the United States] like other Latinos enter a racialized political environment within which they are perceived to be non-white by the dominant culture, regardless of how they define themselves racially" (p. 77). Despite how I developed my racial/ethnic identity as Hispanic and White in the borderland of Miami, when I entered this new city and college, my encounters led me to discover that I am perceived, in this context, non-white, and therefore a Woman of Color, who may not "look American." The encounter left me wondering if my perceived race had anything to do with being offered my position at the college. *Was I chosen for the position because I was perceived to be a person of color? And was I letting them down now that I identified as White?*

Becoming Mentor

As one of my teaching assignments, I facilitate the development of pre-service art educators who, as interns, teach in a K-12 school once a week. On one particular day after team teaching in third grade, I learned that a boy asked an intern, Margot (whose parents are from Taiwan), "Is Margot a Chinese name?" Being unsure how to respond, she ignored the boy and continued with her lesson. At the post conference, Margot wanted to think about how she might have responded.

We discussed different ways to address a similar situation in the future. We thought that next time she could ask: *What makes you say that?* Or if she was comfortable, she could share a little about her parents' immigration. We assured her that moving on in the lesson was also perfectly fine. I wanted her to know that she was not alone is such an experience. I shared that at times, I've been guided by my maternal grandmother's words, *hay veces que a las personas hay que educarlas*, "Sometimes you have to educate people." But, I can't "educate people" all the time because the burden is just too much, and therefore, I can choose not to respond to people's inaccurate presumptions. Margot later shared that she felt relief not being

the only one with such experiences, knowing that her mentor and colleagues also faced challenges associated with perceptions of identity. Margot made a "conscious decision to use inaction as an emotional strategy for preventing the emotional pain" (Evans and Moore, 2005, p. 447) of being misunderstood. In this small group of friends and mentor, she found reassurance that her inaction in that moment was acceptable.

Implications for my Research, Teaching, and Artmaking

The written images bridge my experience and an understanding of socially constructed racial/ethnic identity in, and out of, borderlands. I simultaneously become the constructs of race and ethnicity from my hometown and my new city. For me, becoming a woman of color is a continuous process that transforms who I am as a researcher, teacher, and artist.

Becoming Researcher

My becoming redirected my research focus and pedagogy. My K-12 teaching practice and dissertation research interest addressed learner directed curricular structures that nurture adolescent's independence to address self-developed big ideas through art making. However, my becoming and events such as the Baltimore Uprising, near our school, brought into my lived experience the injustices that I read about in scholarly literature, such as power struggles with police and equal access to education. Living in a largely Black city, working in a predominantly white institution of higher education, preparing mostly white, women teachers, and my own becoming have shifted my research focus toward a better understanding of inequity in our local city and school districts, social justice pedagogy (Anderson, Gussak, & Hallmark, 2010; Quinn, Ploof, & Hochtritt, 2012), and feminist theories (Anzaldúa, 1987; Cooper, 2018; hooks, 1994) to support my pre-service teachers in their own becoming as they face realities in schools. My becoming focuses the viewing angle on the imbalance of educational equity in my institution and within the school districts in our area. My highlighted body in this context and the added layer of color to my identity doesn't allow me to "stay in the same place and be comfortable" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 70). The conscious awareness impresses upon me a sense of responsibility to address power, privilege, and equity as big ideas in my courses.

Becoming Faculty

To become a Woman of Color in the art education field, to me, means that I feel an embodied responsibility to learn and develop pedagogy to engage pre-service teachers in thinking about their race and ethnicity, power and privilege, marginalization and, significantly, the implications for equity in their own teaching. Borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) serves as a framework for pre-service teachers to examine the borders that they inhabit and make visible their conceptions of social reality. My lived experience of becoming and challenging my conceptions of race and ethnicity has taught me to tolerate ambiguity. I embody both White and "of color," both White and not White, both Hispanic and American, both Cuban and not Cuban, as Hispanic-American- Cuban- Ecuadorian. I am both American, and Spanish speaking. I open a space for students to define themselves by posing, "Where are you from?" My goal is to ask pre-service teachers to consider the culture of their primary discourse (Anzaldúa, 1987) as a springboard for examining their positionality within any classroom.

Anzaldúa's (1987) critical examination of location, gender, sexuality, and religion serves as a catalyst for my pre-service teachers to critically examine the ways in which their borders, experiences, and identities impact their teacher identity. I offer Congdon, Stewart, and White (2002) reflective questions as a guide to elaborate and define, explicitly, the communities to which they belong (e.g. racial, ethnic, gender, economic, recreational, political, geographical) and then ask them to consider the importance that each community has on the artworks they make and show to students, their prepared unit plans, and their peer relationships.

We make visual the conceptual identities through an engagement that serves as a metaphor for the varied intersections of identity in any classroom. I post the names of each of the communities that influence identity (Congdon et al., 2002) around the room on boards, chairs, and structural beams. I ask each participant to use string to connect to each of the communities in meaningful order based on their reflections. The process becomes a performance and installation as each participant carefully pins the string around the room, and we navigate each other's presence. The process has been quiet and reflective and other times festive and helpful, which has served as a metaphor for the ways in which classrooms interact. In each case, the resulting installation makes visible a representation of their intersecting identities and, significantly, the cohorts' varied experiences and identities. We follow the process with a discussion that considers variations of the following questions to explore the potential imposition of our socio-cultural assumptions on learners

(Crum & Hendrick, 2014):

> *How do the communities to which we belong impact the types of engagements we design for our students? How does my relationship with each of these communities impact the selection of artworks I select for my students? In what ways can we design engagements that allow us to learn about our students' identities to inform our curriculum design?*

Becoming Artist

My process of becoming fostered a new-found need to share my identity through artmaking. My regular visits to Miami bring into contrast the two social contexts, which I often document through photographs. The early images informed a collaboration Rubia y Trigueña (Blonde and Wheat Color), with a colleague. We created a film documenting what has proven to be an ongoing conversation about race, ethnicity, concepts of home, and belonging, grounded in my experiences in Miami and hers in New York City and Dominican Republic. We shared our film, interweaving conversation and images at our college's faculty exhibit. I used this space to answer the question "Where are you from?" as a way to define myself, since I had learned that others predefined me here. I needed to express the nuances of my identity.

Conclusion

Anzaldúa (1987) gave voice and recognition to the "internal tensions of oppositions" (p. 96), which grind at the Woman of Color, modify and transform her and those around her, should she engage in the process of becoming. The contrast of my self-identity developed as a Hispanic, White woman in a borderland with my identity as a Woman of Color outside of my borderland spurred becoming as an autoethnographic narrative reflection to discover and learn something new (Richardson, 2005), share stories (Anderson, 2014), and interpret the past (Jones, 2005). Becoming a Woman of Color describes the continual process of reflecting on race and ethnicity and connecting to issues of social justice, feminism, and identity through the transformation of my teaching, research, and artistic practices.

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