ARTICLE

EMBODYING CRITICAL FEMINISM IN COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY: UNRAVELING THE FABRIC OF GENDER AND CLASS

Holly Angelique
Pennsylvania State University

In this article, I offer a critical feminist theoretical reflection on my lived experiences as a working-class White woman as a challenge to some of the dominant narratives in academia. In particular, I describe my development of feminist and class-consciousness as an "organic intellectual." I discuss changes to my working-class identity and the challenges of breaking through the glass-class ceiling as an academician. I reveal how stigma management has irrevocably shaped my academic life and how my attempts at cultural suicide have overshadowed my professional and personal lives. I ask for a radical critique of higher education and argue for the importance of community psychology to infuse feminism and class consciousness into the field to address societal power asymmetries and to approach its value stance as a discipline.

INTRODUCTION

Working-class poor, single mothers are not expected to make it through the institutional barriers of higher education, let alone become tenured professors. However, I somehow managed to break through both the "glass" and "class" ceilings (Brine & Waller, 2004). In this autoethnography, I will discuss how the intersection of feminism and classism informed my academic identity, and consequently, how my identity is positioned as a challenge to discourses in community psychology. Through this methodology, I use my lived experiences as my data source (Reinharz, 1992). In line with Mills' (1959) idea of the "sociological imagination," I posit that examining portions of our unique biographies can unmask dominant discourses, i.e., cultural hegemony.

Correspondence to: Holly Angelique, 777 W. Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057. E-mail: hxa11@psu.edu

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In particular, Marcuse (1964) argued hegemony was created and maintained via a "false consciousness," or dominant ideology (beliefs, values, etc.), that is accepted by the masses although it maintains power structures that favor the elite. *Power*, for the purpose of this article, is understood to manifest in social systems (Fryer, 2008) as well as individuals (Angelique, 2008). This is consistent with Foucault (1980), who maintains that power is always present, in all contexts, influencing all social discourses, and often operating below our level of awareness. Thus, cultural hegemony is veiled, insidious, and largely unquestioned as it is perpetuated through dominant institutions (e.g., media, universities). The purpose of this article is to expose gender/class power structures that maintain hegemony and argue for the need to weave feminism and class consciousness into the fabric of community psychology.

On Feminist Consciousness: Virginity Questioned

Feminist scholars (Ferree, 1983; Frye, 1983; Reinharz, 1992; Smith, 1987) have maintained that women's lived experiences constitute the foundation for feminist knowledge. In other words, we can begin the process of consciousness-raising by examining the particular events in our everyday lives (Gurin, 1985; Hill-Collins, 1990; Jaggar, 1983). Feminism came easily to me through my daily life, as I saw and experienced sexism regularly. For example, math was my favorite subject in school until I had a male high school math teacher who refused to call on girls or include girls in any way during course instruction; we came to perceive ourselves as unworthy. At roughly the same time in my adolescent development, my father explained to me, informed by his Catholic upbringing and steeped in a misogynist culture, the importance of remaining a virgin until I got married. I remember vividly the realization that my value as a woman would not be as easily placed upon my mathematical competence as it would my hymen and vagina! As a young woman with a deep desire for knowledge, no desire for marriage, and a self-expectation that I would become a fully functioning adult, sexually and otherwise, this realization caused me great distress and much confusion.

Thus began my journey as an "organic intellectual." Gramsci (1971) argued that the dominant hegemony was able to exist only with the consent of the masses. Therefore, to foster resistance he supported the development of "organic intellectuals" from subordinated classes. Hartsock (1979) developed a strategy for organic intellectual development that involved examining the sociopolitical systems that we are nested within. This strategy involves "appropriating" our lived experiences and is consistent with feminists' assertions that women's experiences of "the everyday and the particular" provide a catalyst for consciousness transformation. In essence, this involves taking daily problems and asking questions, such as, "Who benefits and who loses as a result of this?" It also includes "appropriating collective experiences" by talking and sharing with others. The answers to these questions can help to disentangle everyday and individual hassles from problems of oppression through consciousness-raising that reveals the sociopolitical contexts that our problems are embedded in.

For example, consider a woman who is having childcare difficulties. Most women consider such a problem to be an individual/family matter. However, by appropriating our experiences, we may realize that childcare problems are endemic in this culture and begin to question why the United States is the only industrialized country without a national childcare system. As such, Hartsock (1979) provided a strategy to develop a critical lens from which to challenge dominant institutions, ideologies and

sociopolitical structures. For me, the public school system (math), Catholicism (virginity), and a patriarchal culture (women's subordination) provided the foundation for my organic intellectualism.

Developing a Working-Class Female Identity: On Motherhood and Common Sense

In the United States, class stratification is veiled as the overwhelming majority of people self-identify as "middle-class" whether they are "working-class-poor" (minimum wage earners) or "upper-class-rich" (owning private planes, yachts, belonging to country clubs, etc.). As such, distinct social classes are often masked, along with our critical understanding of the powerful sociopolitical structures that maintain them (Foley, 2005). Not surprisingly, class consciousness did not develop quite as easily as feminism did for me.

On being working class. I grew up in a small mill town in New England. My parents met in the upscale men's shirt factory where they worked and where my grandmother and aunt worked as well. My mother, and later myself (from 18–20 years of age), were *office girls* rather than mill workers, which gave my grandfather, a maintenance worker in a nearby paper mill, great pride. My grandmother, and later, my sister, worked as seamstresses. Zandy (1993) stated that working-class families are largely defined by our parents' occupations and that working-class women typically do the work that more privileged women do not want to do, from taking care of others' children to working in factories, or as clerks and receptionists. Rubin (1994) pointed out, accurately in my case, that working-class people usually work for hourly wages rather than salaries and that their education usually consists of high school and/or vocational training. I was paid minimum wage for as long as I worked at that factory (1980–1982) and never took home over $100 per week.

While historically, Marxism used industrial labor at the center of analysis, hooks (2000) and Griffith (2003) have pointed out that today the concept of "working class" is related to our level of economic security and can be defined by a reality that you could be poor tomorrow as a result of a job loss. hooks (2000) has gone further to describe working-class families as those who work long and hard but still have trouble making ends meet. I do not remember a time when my family, and by extension, I, did not worry about money, regardless of income or the level of economic stability that I have today.

What hooks and others have omitted from their analyses (and yet I have experienced) is how the geographical location that one resides in relative to her or his community shapes us. Throughout my high school years and into my married adult life, I lived in a trailer park, not among the nicer trailers at the front of the park, but among the older trailers in the rear of the park. There is a name for this within our cultural lexicon: *white trailer trash*. Although racially derogatory terms would never pass my neighbors' lips today, a nearby "yuppy" community regularly throws "white trash" street parties, complete with cheap beer by the keg, seemingly unaware that such a label has lifelong consequences for some of their friends. Just typing the term gives me a putrid feeling in my gut as I deliberately resist its power to make me feel like *dirty garbage*.

"Ain't I a smart woman?". A strong working-class value is that of "common sense" over "book smarts." Experience and action is typically valued over theory and intellectualism (Johnson, 2002). Luttrell (1997) explained how the notion of common

sense is passed on generationally and used by working-class women to solve daily problems. I learned such lessons as well. I often heard family members comment on how educated people lack common sense and my grandmother was particularly fond of derogatorily accusing educated people of using "five-dollar words" to try to impress others. Even though my grandmother died in 2000, and she was my greatest support throughout my educational career, I still pause before I type "five dollar words" like *hegemony*, knowing she would not approve. I hear her words "Who are you trying to impress?" lingering in the back of my mind, and I have no answer.

My desire to live in a world of creativity and ideas ran counter to all that I had been taught. I was encouraged to seek higher education, but for vocational goals. "What kind of job can you get with that degree?" is still an often-asked question among my family of origin. As a young, free-spirited teen, I experienced education as liberation and desired more. While traditional academic education came easily to me, artistic creativity was my passion. With no guidance and no understanding of the differences between private and public universities, I was accepted to a prestigious private art school, Rhode Island School of Design, but was forced to drop out due to lack of finances after only one semester. "What kind of job could I get with an art degree anyway?" I asked myself, before getting the expected factory job back home. The lack of educational guidance along with an ascribed set of vocationally oriented values work together to further exclude working-class individuals from higher education, and subsequently reinforce class differences.

On being working-class female. My working-class identity seemed normal, natural, and was unquestioned until well into my adulthood, though I now know it to be a social location embedded within cultural and historical contexts and constructed through power relations that are perpetuated by dominant discourses (Rose, 1993). On average, working-class women place the concept of motherhood and family as the most central and important aspects of our lives, far above education, career, friendships, or anything else. Motherhood is considered a rite of passage and is *the* primary symbol of adult status for working-class women (Mitchell & Green, 2002). Maternal role models are important in our lives and we are taught that marriage and motherhood are our primary life goals (Johnson, 2002; Luttrell, 1997; Mitchell & Green). While maternity may be culturally compulsory (i.e., socially expected) for all women in the United States, middle class women have other markers of adulthood (educational attainment, home ownership, career success, etc.). As such, the dominant discourse may deem maternity as a "choice" but it is really a "relative choice" for all women who wish to avoid social ostracism and barely a choice at all for working-class women who seek adult status.

By age 20, with dreams of higher education waning, but still lingering in the recesses of my subconscious, I was married and had a child. By Catholic standards, I "had to get married." My best friend, who graduated from high school magna cum laude, gave birth 11 days after I did. We both had high school educations. Somehow, we were now effectively adults.

The Intersection of Sexism and Classism: On Increased Vulnerability and Rape

The double oppression of sexism and classism is not simply aggregated in a way that leaves one individual more or less socially marginalized than another. Rather, these

layers of oppression manifest in distinctive ways. I learned about the intersection of sexism and classism in one violent act. Just weeks before I graduated from high school, I was raped by a boy from one of the most prestigious families in town. I did not have a language to articulate my decision *not* to come forward and prosecute, or even reveal this to my closest friends. I just knew that the accusation from a girl from the trailer park against anyone with his family name would not be taken seriously.

Years later, I relived that nightmare as I watched the rape charges against William Kennedy Smith play out in a televised trial, superimposing myself on the anonymous woman with her face obscured by a blue dot. As I predicted, that woman was further humiliated in front of the American public as her own sexual history was questioned and Smith was acquitted. Regardless of guilt or innocence on the part of Smith, the media coverage provided an effective example of the cultural hegemonic discourse around gender and class. As a woman with a lower socioeconomic status than Smith, she was not presented as a "good" victim. Campbell (1998) conducted a nationwide study of rape victims' experiences within medical, legal and mental health systems. She found that successful outcomes within any of these systems (appropriate health screenings, legal convictions, etc.) could be predicted based upon certain characteristics, such as race of the victim and/or perpetrator. Her findings shed light on the different characteristics associated with the "good"/credible victim; mannerisms associated with middle-class values around demeanor, dress, and community reputation.

At age 17, I did not interpret my experience of rape within a larger sexist, classist context. Instead, it left me feeling ashamed, as though my actions had encouraged the hate crime against me. I now see this as a manifestation of internalized oppression (Cudd, 2006; Guillaumin, 1995). Yet, today, over 30 years later, the decision to write this publicly leaves me feeling more vulnerable and exposed than it does liberated by my ability to challenge dominant cultural narratives about power asymmetry.[1] Nonetheless, a critical feminist lens helps me to place this all too common occurrence within a sociopolitical context of misogyny exacerbated by social class as opposed to an individual act of victimization.

In all critical theoretical approaches, an analysis of power is central. Critical feminism arose from a Marxist analysis of power and class inequalities (Lather, 1992). Feminist critical theory places gender, rather than class, at its first line of analysis, pointing out that even within different class or racial subgroups, sexism (and by extension, misogyny) exists (Anderson & Hill-Collins, 1995). Although feminist critical theory has a gendered lens as its initial point for analysis of oppression, it recognizes the importance of race, class, sexual orientation, disabilities and other marginalized statuses to be vitally important to understanding how multiple sociopolitical systems maintain societal power asymmetries (Maneval, 2000).

Systems of power are thought to normalize power asymmetries (i.e., create a false consciousness) that become internalized as people accept their oppression without question or protest (Cudd, 2006). It is in this way that women continue to be blamed, and we often blame ourselves for being sexually assaulted and victimized. It is only when we start to appropriate our experiences, individually and collectively, asking, "Who benefits?" can we begin to unmask the social and institutional structures that maintain patriarchal, capitalist dominance.

[1] The decision to write about such a personal violation was not without much deliberation and soul-searching. However, I decided that it was the most truthful way to describe my own consciousness-raising. To the extent that my story can help to raise a collective consciousness, it is worth my discomfort.

Breaking Through the Glass-Class Ceiling via Education

As my lived experiences showed, and academic research has clarified, early motherhood, lack of economic resources, family support, and time needed to pursue higher education are important barriers faced by working-class women (Cervero, Wilson, & Associates, 2001). My working-class female identity seemed to be fixed with early motherhood and marriage. And within a few months of becoming a married mother, I went from being a spirited young artist to a Navy wife without my consent. At that time in my life, my earlier educational aspirations seemed unlikely and largely unattainable. Leonhardt (2010) has asserted that working-class women rarely have a choice between career and family. However, Cox and Pascall (1994) found that some women's desires for careers and economic independence led them to reevaluate their original social position and social identities that focused on matrimony and maternity. Such was my desire.

Ironically, being a Navy wife enabled me to go back to college. I found myself (passive voice intended here) in San Diego, California, where the Navy offered a program for military spouses to attend community college for $50 per semester. Along with a progressive childcare system, in which I was able to barter my own services (working at the day care center) for free, quality, childcare, I was able to re-start my college career. Maneval (1999) used a critical feminist lens to explore working-class women who attended community college as they explored social power relations and interpreted their experiences. Her findings are as follows: (a) participants viewed their identities as mother and partner as the most significant social identities to their lives; (b) the choice of attending a community college was related to both White and African American women's positioning and identity construction within working-class structure; (c) educational success changed their perceptions of the self and increased personal and social power; and (d) the motherhood identity elicited feelings of guilt as they felt pulled between their compulsory cultural identity and their belief that education provided a way to role model for their children. All of her findings resonate with my personal experiences.

Bringing motherhood to college. When working-class women go to college, we bring our children with us (especially if we are single mothers, as I was by the time my daughter turned 4 years old). Yet motherhood is both compulsory and problematic for all women who aspire to have professional careers. Bertrand, Golden, and Katz (2009) studied MBA graduates from 1990–2006 and found that while no significant differences in income were found by gender at early stages of one's career, income disparities that favored men were found by mid-career (10 years into one's career). This disparity was associated with gender differences in (a) training before completing the graduate degree, (b) career disruptions, and (c) weekly hours worked. They found motherhood to be the main factor for these gender differences. On average, only women without children had careers that approximated men by mid-career. This phenomenon is referred to as the "mommy track" (Stewart, 2003).

Luckily, I did not know these bleak statistics as I focused on pursuing higher education. Nonetheless, I found many barriers within the academy, even within the feminist community. As an undergraduate, my first feminist mentor would not allow me to bring my child to research meetings, which were held after the daycare center on campus had closed for the evening. This made it extremely hard to volunteer my time to gain valuable research experience. Later, in my first paid feminist research

position, I discovered that my childcare needs would not be accommodated in terms of scheduling work hours. Despite little support from family, a lack of support from the academic feminist community, and career prospects uncertain, I persevered. I found it ironic that only the military seemed to support my higher education.[2]

In one study focused on working-class Black women attending community college, Johnson-Bailey and Brown (1997) found that contrary to popular belief, childcare, transportation and cost were not the most salient barriers to academic success, but rather the need for a healthy environment and mentors that would competently and sensitively attend to issues of race, gender and class. As a White woman, I longed for a mentor who would be sensitive to these issues.

Oh those student loans. I had hoped that I might change my class standing, including my financial strain, through education. But by the time I completed my PhD, I had a substantial student loan debt. Fortunately, I was able to complete a BA and MA as a resident of California, a state with low college tuition rates and affordable, quality childcare at the time. This left me with far less debt than some working-class colleagues who have accrued, with exorbitant interest rates, up to $200,000 in debt. Educational mobility does not guarantee economic mobility.

My debt affected my daughter most directly when I accepted an academic position at Penn State Harrisburg, located in the working-class town of Middletown. While many of my colleagues lived in the neighboring town of Hershey (famed for chocolate and an excellent medical center, with well-funded public schools), I could only afford to live in Middletown (location of the infamous 1979 nuclear accident at Three Mile Island), where public school textbooks were outdated and some still referred to the African American population as "negroes." This seemed to me to be yet another example of how class standing is passed on generationally as it remains locked in position by overlapping institutions (educational, financial, etc.) of power.

Not my vagina again!. Regardless of student loan debt, I thought my salary was on par with my colleagues until I discovered that I had been hired at $7,000 less per year than a newly hired man with a very similar vita with regard to level of scholarship. With memories of my father's earlier advice, I was left to wonder whether a penis had a $7,000 greater value over a vagina. Once again, I felt a personal violation as I realized that my value seemed to be less related to my academic success and competence than it was my genitalia.[3] Once again, sexism was overt and hard for me to miss. Educational success had not protected me from what I perceived to be economic gender discrimination. Again, by appropriating my personal experience, I was able to note the well-documented gendered wage gap that reflects broader social contexts shaped by power asymmetries.

Stigma Management: Or "How to NOT Look Poor in Plus-Sized Clothing"

Social class is often experienced in the academy as a stigmatized social location (Granfield, 1991). Our class position of origin affects how we talk and act (Ohmann, 2003). It is reflected in our mannerisms, speech, appearance, and clothing (Luttrell,

[2] I contend that other barriers are in place that reduce the likelihood that military spouses will take advantage of this opportunity. I've met only one other military wife in my 8 years in California who took advantage of this program. She was a math major.

[3] I should note that no gender discrimination grievance was necessary; the salary difference was corrected when I brought it to the attention of the school director.

1997). Whether we are considered "loud' or "unladylike" or as "lacking fashion sense" relative to middle-class women (Ali, 2003), our social class of origin affects our adult lives regardless of successful class mobility through education, job, marriage, etc. (Johnson, 2002). As such, we are expected to *manage* our stigmatized identities by adopting new behaviors.

On working-class mannerisms. When I was finishing my PhD and was beginning the job search process, one of my professors gave me very good interviewing advice, warning me that my "informal style" might work against me during the interview process and gave me a few tips to *act* more professionally, which included such things as posture, personal presentation, and conversational style. This truly was welcome advice, and I do not mean to diminish it, but it left me feeling insecure. And it left me with many questions. At the individual level of analysis, this might simply be a result of my personal style, *or* it could be related to my class background. Using Hartsock's strategy of appropriating my experiences, I asked, "Was this simply "an individual personality trait?" or "a manifestation of some sort of oppression?" What I discovered was that within the professional world, I lacked "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1984; Putnam, 2000). I never had dance classes, played sports, or had other "bodily" training that would have taught me how my body should move through space in ways that would communicate professionalism. Even my working-class athletic friends, with more body awareness, did not learn how to act "ladylike." We never went to cotillion or belonged to any social club where communication skills for professional social events would be practiced. I, instead, lied about my age to get a job after school.

Learning to walk and talk like a lady. Although class might not be as visible as gender or race, it is not easy to conceal whether one desires to do so or not. Goffman's (1963) classic work on "stigma management" has shown how those of us with marginalized statuses learn to control our social identities by monitoring the information we reveal about ourselves. This is commonly referred to as "passing" but Goffman referred to it as "undesired differentness."

One way to *pass* among middle-class academic colleagues is to change our speech, mannerisms, and appearance. Although passing might be rewarded in that we are perceived as *normal*, it is replete with negative consequences, including increased levels of stress and at a cost of denying a large part of our identity by trying to fit into a culture where we will never fully belong (Zandy, 1993). One example of this is that we learn to speak in new ways. I cannot pinpoint when or how I lost most of my Maine accent, where we eat *pizzer* and drive *cahs*. I do not remember "faking my way" to a new dialect. I do remember being teased in college and trying to start pronouncing words as they were written. I did not consciously forsake my past, but in hindsight, I must admit that I feared that people thought I was "dumb" because of the way I spoke. While a Bostonian accent reminiscent of the Kennedy family might carry an air of prestige, the *Downeast* dialect of the salty fishermen does not, at least not in the mind of a New Englander committing "cultural suicide" (Tierney, 1999), abandoning my primary identity to try to succeed in a middle-class university setting.

Granfield (1991) focused on class stigma in his research on working-class students who gained admission into an Ivy League law school. While they entered the university with a great sense of class pride, with goals of working for social justice, their working-class identification began to recede as students experienced feelings of "differentness." Viewing their class backgrounds as a burden, and lacking cultural

capital, many experienced a "crisis in competency" and began to feel "dumb." Some spoke of being aware and self-conscious about the use of "proper English." As such, they experienced increased levels of stress far greater than middle-class students. This mirrors my own experience.

As these working-class students discovered that they lacked mannerisms, speech patterns, fashion/clothing, and experiences that were similar to their middle class peers, they reacted to their class stigma by concealing and managing information about their backgrounds, such as past academic experiences that were without prestige. In other words, they learned to "fake it" to fit in. Because stigma limits opportunity in the middle-class world, identity management is practically required for success, and was often guided by professional career counselors who taught them how to present themselves as middle-class, through social skills, speech, attire, etc., to attain profitable job opportunities. Unfortunately, these management strategies led to identity ambivalence, as these students could not overcome their class backgrounds nor could they fully embrace middle-class ways of being. This identity conflict was also associated with feelings of guilt and "selling out." Because the stigma associated with class is considered *just*, these identity struggles are considered individual problems and have consequences that are often experienced as quite disempowering, providing all the more reason to approach our gender/class social location with a critical lens.

Self-presentation: On sizeism and clothes. In Granfield's (1991) study, he noted that students acquired new dress codes to conceal working-class identities. Appearance is directly related to both our identities as well as access to "elite social positions" (Bourdieu, 1984) and certain public domains. Even if you lack cultural capital, you may be able to fake it or mimic middle-class peers through dress. However, on average, working-class women are "fatter" than middle-class women. Drewnowski and Specter (2004) looked at the link between poverty and obesity and determined that healthy diets tend to cost more than unhealthy diets. Those of us who grew up on pasta and potatoes tend to be overweight as adults.

Without expanding this discussion to sizeism in the professional workplace and U.S. culture in general (particularly with respect to women and the importance placed on our physical appearance and adherence to cultural standards of beauty, which warrants another full-length article),[4] I want to draw attention to the practical fact that it is very difficult to afford quality, plus-sized clothes. In the relationship between quality and value, fabric is the key (Rudie, 1991) and inexpensive fabrics are often characterized by puckered seams, patterns that are cut against the grain, poor seam quality (Gupta, Leek, Barker, Buchanon, & Little, 1992), less color saturation, designs that do not match at the seams, and even poor stitching (remember I used to work in a high-end men's shirt factory). In short, rather than looking professional and tailored, many of us feel fat and frumpy. In addition to being overweight, our clothing options exacerbate the stigma.

One way many working-class women cope with this is to eschew fashion altogether. The value of frugality takes precedence over fashion sense, and as a result, many working-class women ignore clothing trends altogether. A glaring example of this is

[4] This is a noteworthy example of intersecting identities around class and gender. Women are subjected to more rigid standards of appearance than men. As such, passing or "fitting in" does not carry the same "weight" for working-class men in that a wider range of sizes is accepted for men. Dor, Ferguson, Langwith, and Tan (2010) calculated the annual cost of being obese in the workplace to be a salary difference of $4,879 for women and $2,646 for men. Clearly, obesity disproportionately affects women in the workplace.

when my working-class friend told me that she was planning to wear her neutral colored "crocs" (a plastic clog that retails for about $20) to a job interview because her brightly colored ones would be less appropriate. It took quite a bit of persuasion to convince her to invest in a high-quality pair of shoes for the interview. Her disinterest in fashion created a barrier to career advancement (perhaps a byproduct of internalized gender/class oppression).

As such, the barriers for working-class women in the academy are great. With all of my efforts, some intentional and some unconscious, I am still an informal, chubby, casual dresser with a slight Maine accent.

Living in Two Worlds, an Imposter in Both

Being who I am today leaves me socially positioned on the invisible gender/class border. I have a "foot in two worlds" (Dielmann, 2009) but I am a bit of a stranger in both. On the one hand, the borderland of gender/class in the academy begs the ultimate working-class question, "Will I be able to keep my common sense?" (Dielmann), and I am left without a clear answer. Trying to integrate "street-smarts" with "book-smarts" when you have not read the classics can lead to serious feelings of "impostership." For those of us with a working-class upbringing, the required attempts to pass often leads to isolation and alienation as we feel marginalized in our professional worlds as well as within our families of origin who no longer understand us (Richardson, Lawrence-Brown, & Paige, 2004). Although I am certain that I have far more common sense than many of my colleagues, they often beg to differ with me.

On the other hand, "I can't go home again." My mannerisms, speech and dress have changed. I live in a world of theory and ideas, with opportunities to expand my horizons through travel, continued education, teaching, publishing, and interacting with similarly educated colleagues; this world is a foreign land to my family of origin. My choices fly in the face of my mother and her mother before her. Although motherhood has remained the most important aspect of my personal identity throughout my adult life, I did not place marriage and maternity at the center of my professional life. Instead, I developed a "self": an identity outside the realm of family that focused on intellectual and creative pursuits. For working-class women, "having a self" is synonymous with "being selfish," so my life choices are often viewed with suspicion. Moreover, my gender juxtaposed to my class mobility is emasculating to the men in my family who struggled economically to provide for their families.

Simply put, it has taken me years to begin the process of *unraveling* this gender/class dynamic to begin to understand how and why I feel as though I am to be forever positioned as an outsider within the university. And because I consider the academy to be my professional "home," this outsider status leaves me unsettled. However, as I sit on the border's fence, I have come to see and embrace my working-class values as my primary strengths. Being a mother led me to be nurturing. Being informal makes me unpretentious. Being casual makes me approachable in both the academy *and* the community. And I have found a new home on the fence: I am comfortable as a profoundly ignorant but nonetheless slightly elitist academician. And so, as I write this, I discover that I am indeed weaving a new integrated identity. And this identity (or multiplicity of identities) leaves me socially positioned as a "bridge person" (Moraga & Anzaldua, 1984), a "border crosser" (Giroux, 1993), and a "boundary spanner" (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000). Although my marginalized statuses may locate me socially on a fence, it leaves me with a powerful view of the landscape.

Community Psychology Education: Liberator or Hegemonic Enforcer?

An important point to consider is that one of the functions of higher education is to indoctrinate us into the dominant values of both patriarchy and the middle/upper class. Moreover, gender, class, and other hierarchical social structures are presented as normal, maintaining hegemonic power (Nesbit, 2006). When considering multiple oppressions, Butterwick (1988) found that many women in clerical training experienced racism, ageism, and classism. She explained that we "should not take for granted the organization of women's education and training, but rather, look at the structure of education and work and how it is negotiated." (p. 25). This is an important lesson for community psychology.

The denial of the existence of different social classes helps to mask the function of education to enforce cultural hegemony. Consequently, for working-class students and professors there is a cost. Our integrity and identities are challenged and changed via graduate training, leading to a form of "cultural suicide." As an example, I once sat on a dissertation committee in another field, where a middle-aged military man had focused his doctoral research on how important it was to maintain a working-class identity through graduate training. By his final defense, he had changed his focus, and his title, to reflect the identity crisis that resulted from his research (Jensen, 2008). Education, and the privilege that manifests through our inevitable transformation resulting from it, changes us all. For survival in the academic world, we must adopt characteristics of middle-class identities. This begs a question, "Is this "forced" code of passing a legitimate function of higher education or one that should be challenged?"

Why Community Psychology Needs a Critical Feminist Lens

The point of this article is not to provide a blueprint for "passing" for working-class women; it is rather to provide a foundation from which to unpack and challenge the social and historical institutions of power that remain dependent upon dominant cultural discourses. Nesbit (2005) pointed out that positions of privilege and power are maintained through structural systems that include educational practices. As such, community psychology is positioned to produce and reproduce cultural hegemonic discourse *or* advance an emancipatory pedagogy.

The field of community psychology, steeped in institutions of power and privilege, has only begun to explore gendered relationships and lacks in-depth analyses of class-consciousness. When we overlook sociostructural power and ignore gender and class barriers, we limit our understanding to individual-level analyses, which is both distorted and potentially victim blaming. The good news is that the field now has a strong foundation from which to build upon and to incorporate a critical feminist lens. As early as 1988, Mulvey pointed out the commonalities between feminism and community psychology. In 2000, the *American Journal of Community Psychology* published a double-volume special issue on feminism and community psychology. In that issue, Angelique and Culley (2000) conducted an analysis of the field and found that community psychology was not very successful at addressing women's concerns, in general. However, in a later study, we found that the field did "get it right" when feminist research was (albeit rarely) published. In particular, we found that gender consciousness was characterized by analyses of (a) gender-stratified power imbalances, (b) individuals within environments, (c) multiple contexts related to gender, and (d) a focus on women's competencies (Angelique & Culley, 2003).

Additionally, some scholarship has addressed the issue of power dynamics in a way that is consistent with critical approaches. In 2001, a small group of community psychologists attending a conference on critical psychology drafted the *Monterey Declaration of Critical Community Psychology* (Angelique & Kyle, 2001), outlining principles to (a) redress social injustices, (b) create a utopian vision, (c) understand behavior in context, (d) foster critical awareness and consciousness-raising, (e) encourage university-community partnerships, (f) embrace methodological pluralism, (g) develop theories of human subjectivity, power asymmetries and social change, (h) advance broad interdisciplinary training, and (i) address inequalities at all levels. Prilleltensky ([1997, 2003, 2008) and some of his colleagues have long advocated for an attention to power analysis and critical approaches in this field (Davidson et al., 2006; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Still others have focused on the analysis of social power dynamics as challenging more individual notions of empowerment (Angelique, 2008; Angelique & Culley, 2007; Culley & Angelique, 2010; Culley & Angelique, in press; Culley & Hughey, 2008; Mulvey et al., 2000; Speer & Hughey, 1995). Furthermore, in 2008, the *Journal of Community Psychology* published a special issue on power and psychopolitical validity. Educational disciplines such as community psychology can perpetuate the norms of the dominant culture (Luttrell, 1989) or they can become forces for liberatory and emancipatory education (Friere, 1970; hooks, 1994).

CONCLUSION

The intersection of sexism and classism is inscribed on women's bodies, quite literally (from sexuality to sexual violence; maternity to mannerisms). And our bodies (as well as those we reproduce/our children) are problematized in the academy, from the moment we enter as undergraduates throughout our academic careers. We need a radical critique of academia, in general, and community psychology, in particular. We must ask critical questions, such as "What is wrong with these systems?" and "How can they be changed?"

The first step in that process is to embark on our own journeys as organic intellectuals and begin to appropriate our lived experiences. Based on my own experiences, I propose a few specific recommendations for changing our pedagogical practices and promoting institutional structural change within the academy. First, educational guidance is needed at the high-school level. Practical advice (e.g., how to fill out financial aid forms, choose an appropriate computer for college), general factual knowledge (that earning power increases with advanced educational degrees, regardless of the field of study), as well as the careful consideration of the purpose of education would all be helpful for working-class teens considering higher education. In our own college classrooms, we can place classism solidly among other forms of oppression that we commonly discuss and include scholarly readings focused on class analyses and the intersections of multiple oppressions. We can borrow from other disciplines, such as sociology, until our own field has attended to this issue critically. To encourage community psychology to focus on classism, I encourage the major journals to devote a special issue to class analyses, as they have done for race/ethnicity, feminism, etc.

Within the structure of the academy, I propose that we fight for change by focusing on economic security for new faculty members. Programs that offer student

loan forgiveness and/or low-interest loans could make the transition to academic careers more manageable for many academicians from working-class backgrounds. Moving allowances do not generally consider rental deposits, down payments, professional clothing, etc., and many of us have completed graduate school at the very end of tight budgets, with massive student loans and other debt. Some have even maximized their credit card debt to complete graduate training and have no additional funding streams at their disposal.

Finally, we can all fight to raise awareness and expose issues of classism and the intersection of class and gender oppression when we witness it. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1996) discovered that working-class Black women used coping mechanisms that range from silence to protest to address systems of power that perpetuated racism, sexism and classism. Throughout my academic training and career I have remained silent about the lack of attention to classism in community psychology—until now. Today, I hope that this article is received as a sign of protest. Community psychology is positioned to be a field that challenges the status quo, providing a counter-hegemonic discourse. As we weave an analysis of gender and class (as well as race, sexual orientation, size, ability and other marginalized identities) into our scholarship and action, we will inevitably strengthen the fabric of our field.

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