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Becoming a Culturally Relevant Feminist Teacher: an Autoethnography of an Exchange Student

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BECOMING A CULTURALLY RELEVANT FEMINIST TEACHER:

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF AN EXCHANGE STUDENT

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This thesis recounts the journey of an exchange student at a public university in Central Illinois. By reflecting on her experiences as a Master's student in the United States and high school teacher in Indonesia, the author unpacks her journey on becoming a feminist teacher through feminist methodology with autoethnography as the research method and her coursework reflections as the research tools. The author argues for the need of a feminist lens to make meaning of her learning experience amidst the consequences of her multiple status and identities as an international student, a Master's student, an exchange student, and an Indonesian woman teacher with prior years of experience of teaching chemistry in high school in a developing country. The author then reveals her progress in overcoming her inferiority complex towards the Whiteness in which she contends as parts of decolonizing education. Finally, this autoethnographic research proposes a culturally relevant feminism deemed viable in the author's home institution in North Sumatra, Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: autoethnography, feminism, teacher, education, exchange student, Indonesia

BECOMING A CULTURALLY RELEVANT FEMINIST TEACHER:

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PROLOGUE

As my Master's program concludes, I find myself constantly reflecting on my personal and academic journey. When I was interviewed by my sponsor back in Indonesia, the panel asked me to share with them about my short and long-term professional goals. The interview panel for the scholarship, which was funded by the United States government, consisted of the following individuals: two White, American men, an Indonesian man, and an Indonesian woman who wore a hijab. I recalled responding to the question by sharing with them my ambition to become a more skillful teacher and a mentor teacher for my colleagues. Further, I described how Indonesian K-12 education needs more educational scholars and experts, as the nation's focus has been heavily set on higher education alone. "After finishing my master's program in the United States, I want to become one of those experts," I said willfully, to which the four interviewers responded with nods of confirmation. I assumed my ambition aligned with the purpose of the scholarship because I passed the interview.

Now, here I am; my Master's program is nearly complete, and I still have the desire to remain true to myself and my teaching profession. However, the definition and description of a more skillful teacher and a mentor teacher has significantly shifted from my original version. When I departed my home country, I was not who I am today. I had not realized the opportunity for self-criticism in regard to my inferiority complex. Coming from an ex-colonized developing country, I developed a peculiar obsession towards the United States, but I had not yet processed this obsession through a critical way. Superficially, I viewed pedagogical theories developed in my host country as highly superior to the ones from my home country. Afterall, like most educators from developing countries, teachers in Indonesia too have been so used to adopting educational philosophies and theories from the developed nations.

In the first week of August 2017, I stepped onto American soil for the very first time, self-determined to obtain the skills required to create various and creative teaching methodologies for teachers in my school district. From one principal to another at my school, we have been continuously told that creative teachers who construct democratic classrooms improve the educational environment for students. Assuming the pedagogical creativity rooted and celebrated in the highly democratic classroom setting like the one in the United States, I was ready to absorb the related practical approach during my coursework. As a practicing teacher for almost ten years, I tended to lean towards acquirement of methodologies and skills rather than the conception of philosophical approach. This attitude was catalyzed mainly by the increasing stress related to teachers' lack of power in educational policy. As a result, I aimed for practicality, which resulted in a sustained focus on teaching methodology.

Looking back, I notice now how far I have swayed from my original self and plan. For one, I have come to acknowledge my inferiority complex through critical reflection. By doing so, it was easier for me to be self-critical, a quality I consider necessary for self-improvement. I also have realized that the creation of teaching methodology, although relying on practicality, is driven by a philosophical take, if not through a specific lens. Finally, in revisiting my motivation during my scholarship interview, I no longer strive only to be a more skillful teacher as I set myself to be. I now in the pursuit of proving my self-reclaim as a feminist teacher. For those who have similar backgrounds as I do, I have an instinct that this narrative of tilting away from the original plan sounds familiar. Feminism has also become an essential and prominent issue in current political and daily lives worldwide. However, the story of a woman becoming a feminist teacher in a rural North Sumatra, Indonesia, after completing her Master's program in the United States, is uncommon.

CHAPTER I: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF AN EXCHANGE STUDENT

Introduction

As a high school chemistry teacher with a Bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, binary thinking became a default teaching philosophy for me. The oxidation state for oxygen in its elemental form is equal to zero, chemical compounds can be broken down into their elements through chemical reactions only, and exothermic reactions must release energy to the surroundings of the system. While there are exceptions to the rules of chemistry, as shown by the multiple irregularities in the regulations of oxidation states of elements, for instance, I personally do not like to discuss it with my students. I fear that it will only confuse them. Chemistry as a subject is already a quite intimidating course for most of my students without highlighting all the anomalies of the rules.

Compared to biology and physics, I usually find my students have less confidence in chemistry for two main reasons. First, it is introduced much later in their K-12 education. While physics and biology are taught in the first grade as a combined science then as their own in third grade, chemistry makes its way as an independent course in 10th grade. The novelty aspect contributes to the unfamiliarity feeling shared among my students. The second consideration is the nature of chemistry itself. Based on my own professional experience of teaching chemistry for years and testimonies from my own students, chemistry is not only new, but it is also divided into two ways of thinking: quantitative and qualitative parts. My students' way of labelling is more straightforward: the topics are either related to mathematics or they are reliant on memorization. Just because a student of mine excels in heavily quantitative units in my class, that does not guarantee that she/ he/ they will find the same level of comfort when indulging in qualitative topics of chemistry.

Unsurprisingly, my undergraduate engineering education followed up by my methods and pedagogies of teaching high school chemistry influenced my perspective as a graduate student in a United States educational institution located in central Illinois in 2017-2019. Now I can see quite clearly how binary thinking does not bode well with the philosophy of graduate level learning. To complicate things even more, issues related to my status as an international student, an exchange student, and a woman teacher from developing country studying in a far more developed country become an amalgam from which I am enervated. I continuously wear these multiple identities as the backdrop of my learning process. As an international student, I must deal with acculturative stress. As an exchange student, I am expected to be the agent of the cultural exchange who regularly views things through dual perspectives. As a woman teacher, I am baffled with the critical realization of how education is filled with theorizers who are men. Most of my colleagues and classmates, however, are women.

For example, until last semester, I considered myself a Popham follower. I admired his works regarding the significance of objectivity in student assessment (Popham, 2014). I never found his details in outlining the steps to create a strongly objective question item for assessment challenging. Rather, it had helped encourage my binary thinking. The assessment item is either objective or not; it is either well developed or poorly created. However, I constantly found the theories did not align with my prior experiences. Likewise, my experiences frequently did not confirm my previous knowledge either. I studied American English through engagements with the American popular culture such as TV series, movies, literatures, and songs. I internalized these encounters and built my version of my dream country housed in the United States. However, as one of my professors pointed out in class, it was the sanitized version of the United

States that I was familiar with due to the lack of diverse representations. Thus, I could not afford not to unlearn the whole thing.

The experience related to finding avenues for understanding the more complete stories about my host country led to other fundamental questions. What if the things that I thought I knew were only illusions and misrepresentations? Professionally, what if the pedagogical theories I was so comfortable adopting and applying needed to be challenged? On a personal level, what if the religion that I had been devotedly following was not as I thought it was? What if binary thinking no longer fits? These series of questions affected me deeply, so much so that when I was searching for answers, I noticed how my mental health was drastically impacted. I started visiting Student Health Service for regular individual counselling, and as a result, I found myself rigorously digging into my past involving both personal and professional experiences.

Eventually, researching my thesis using traditional methods, which is to obtain data from other people, became less viable as my mental health was compromised. I was too vulnerable to be engaged in research that requires direct involvement with other people to generate data that would be required for traditional research. I needed a safe space to explore and unpack all the knowledge and experiences that I have unlearned, relearned, and learned for the first time in my program. Further, I felt the need to prove that binary thinking, such as the norms of the scientific method, was not always the answer to everything. Two professors from different departments on my campus helped me to turn to autoethnography. I was relieved to find out that I do have a medium to channel my personal narrative: an autoethnographic thesis.

I came to this country expecting to improve my pedagogical knowledge and skills through the Western perspective, not knowing that in the end, I would realize that I can only do so by returning to my true self, a feminist woman teacher coming from rural Sumatra, Indonesia.

Still, the journey of unexpected results is worth recounting. The thesis of this autoethnography is my journey of becoming a feminist teacher.

Research Method and Tools

Autoethnography

Chang (2008) contends that autoethnography research provides space to make a connection between the culture, the researcher's self, and the other. The researcher also plays a role as the informant and author at the same time. Autoethnography "transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation", making this self-narrative approach relevant in contemporary social sciences and humanity (Chang, 2008). I view these properties of autoethnography to be suitable for my background and goal in my thesis' narrative. In education, reflection on previous and ongoing teaching experiences through autoethnography is strongly encouraged as it helps the teacher continue to develop and grow both professionally and personally (Pinner, 2018). Further, it can be a source of evaluation and improvement through self-examination. By conducting autoethnographic practice, a teacher simultaneously holds multiple identities: an educator, researcher, author, and person. Teachers need to dissect their stories, assumptions, values, habits, and emotions they bring into their classrooms (Miller, 2017).

Ellis and Bochner (2000) further dissect the complexity of autoethnography, arguing that it "displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 79). Ellis and Bochner (2000) also consider that the ongoing process of returning to the author's past through his/her/their current lens and experiences are also embedded in the research process. I see myself connect more to this conception of autoethnography than any other conception. I agree that through autoethnography, I will present my vulnerability through reflecting on my understanding of a different culture. When "distinctions between the personal and cultural

become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition" (p. 79), one could argue that autoethnography represents the culture through the personal (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). In other words, my personal autoethnography potentially represents others.

Channeling Multiple Status

Being a teacher is not my sole status during my Master's program. I am an international student as well. I found autoethnography helpful for providing space to share my relatively unique experience compared with my class mates of who are American teachers. With the cultural shock that might linger, "autoethnography has become a standardized term for a spectrum of research that utilizes researcher experience as a means to explore and better understand culture" (Corah-Hopkins, 2014, p. 20). The academic atmosphere also contributes to the specific stories of international students' experiences. For example, Asian international students in American universities tend to perceive their classroom experiences as challenging and uncomfortable due to the different teaching and learning dynamic compared to their prior experiences in their own home countries (Liberman, 1994; Lin, 2012).

International students generally fixate on the differences between their host and home countries, leading to failure to acknowledge similarities in either historical, philosophical, or practical issues between the two (Lazarte Elliot, Reid, & Baumfield, 2016). Indonesia as my home country is one of the ex-colonized developing countries and at the same time, the largest archipelagic country in the world. This unique combination of historical and geographic features provides the context to understand the nation's constant struggles to strive for education equity (Mark & Ed, 2011). As is the case in the United States, my host country shares a similar struggle in providing equity in education. In fact, both Indonesia and the United States constantly struggle in international education assessments such as Program for International Student Assessment

(PISA), proven by relatively low ranks obtained compared to each respective peer countries (OECD, 2016). The similarities of background, according to the same report, include economic disparity.

Adding to my status as an international student with prior experience as a teacher, I too am an exchange student. This status differentiates the way I think, process, and respond in academic settings from international students. Exchange students are bound to return to their respective home country after completing the program. In our learning process in the host country, international exchange students are conditioned to consciously and unconsciously activate their dual reflective senses in a way that is different from how most international students do. Rather than just focus their learning on the American context alone, professional exchange students are expected by their respected sponsor, home country, and themselves, to be more precise in their efforts to find connections. This process provides the space to generate relevant applicable ideas and plans in their professional fields when they return to their home country.

This relatively unique acculturative stress intensifies as both cultural and professional clashes are inevitable among students who come from developing countries. The desire and excitement to absorb the good values and practices they regularly observe and learn in their host country increase. The intention to then adopt the lessons into their home country, however, is slowly curbed by the realization through multiple encounters. The acknowledgement that American pedagogical approaches might not work elsewhere might sound basic, but I learned it the hard way. My colonial consciousness (Balagangadhara, 2012) initially thought that because a policy worked in the United States, it must be good to bring it back home. After all, as an ex-colonized developing country, Indonesia frequently adopts policies and curricular instructions

from developed countries such as the United States. For instance, I remember when standardized testing was implemented in Indonesia in 2004. This was an apparent attempt to adopt the American policy, "No Child Left Behind Act" (2001) from the Bush administration. Other example is related to teaching theories. As teachers, we were familiar with conceptions theorized by American educational theorizers, such as Popham's (2014) guides on assessment or Bloom's taxonomy in cognitive aspects of learning. Then, in creating formative assessments, such as mid-term and final-term exams in our school, Popham's and Bloom's principles became our guide.

Reflections as Autoethnographic Tool

Through my courses in the Master's program, reflections become a common practice encouraged by every instructor. Although reflective writing has become a habit for most of my American classmates, it is quite a new path for me. As the only international student in most classrooms of the courses that I took and due to my introverted personality, my reflections became the most convenient avenues to internalize my multiple status and identities along with the embedded consequences. In this autoethnography, I utilized these reflections as a set of the autoethnographic tool (Duncan 2004; Ellis 2004; Wall 2006) to present my narrative about my struggle to decolonize my consciousness on the journey of reclaiming my feminist lens. Afterwards, a brief analysis for each of the reflection was provided to accommodate the guiding questions of this thesis. My argument for this approach was an attempt to reduce the distance between formal education and learning (Patel, 2016). I learned many ideologies and structures in my coursework, which guided my journey. The things that I reflected on the coursework were also the things that guided my personal growth outside the classroom. In the reflections, I utilized thesis derived from the courses I took during my Master's program at Illinois State University (ISU) which informed both professional and personal aspects of my learning.

Purpose and Context of the Study

This autoethnography presents my autoethnographic research to make sense of my learning experience as an exchange student in the Master's program in the School of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University. The first theme of this autoethnography is about my attempts to overcome my internalized inferiority complex related to the decolonization of the consciousness and education (Patel, 2016). I wrote the following poem as a response to an essay about White Talk (Bailey, 2014). I consider that the poem can serve as a context to describe my internalized racial inferiority complex towards the Whiteness.

My Inferiority Complex

(Or Something Else)

When talking to the Whites here in the United States:

"Are you from… China?"

(Apparently, we all look alike)

… (smile then shrugs)

"Did you understand what I said? Do I need to speak slower?"

(At the immigration, the interview was conducted in English. If I didn't understand English, I wouldn't be here in this country)

Smile, "Yes, of course I understand, please continue"

I've become more like a dolphin

Putting on a smiling face to regress my emotions

"You speak really good English!!"

(Oh, fine, it is exhausting. I'll speak broken English from now on)

"But, really, you put out some complicated English terms right there"

I have to say something

"Well, we have to pass certain proficiency in English to be accepted in American universities"

"You speak four languages?"

"Yes, Batak Toba, which is my ethnic group and first language; then Bahasa Indonesia, my country's national language; English comes as third, and I studied Japanese when I spent a year and a half in the country for teacher's training program"

"Oh"

(So, not a single Western European language there then, move along)

I have to survive

"I struggle in speaking English"

"The dynamic is hard"

"Well..."

Then

Silence…

It is so much easier

Just nod along

But the brain must not stop critiquing,

listening to understand, not to respond

"English is her third language"

"She is this, she is that"

I am standing right next to her; I can talk but maybe my accent is a challenge

"Where do you come from?"

Oh, hell no,

"I'm sorry, I'm on the phone,"

(I was playing Pokémon go)

"So, in Indonesia, do you have this and that?"

(I don't know, out of its 17,000 islands, I've only been to three, or four… maybe five!)

Smile, then respond in a good manner

"How do you pronounce your name again?"

(It's the third time)

(Pronouncing my name all wrong)

"It's okay, you tried"

Awkward laughter.

On the dining table,

Fried chickens were served

With my fingers I licked them

All eyes on me

I stopped caring

This dining etiquette is also exhausting

My uncle was concerned,

"Why do you eat like that? Have you not ever dined with White people? Have you ever been

invited to White people's house for dinner?"

(There is no one around! This is not a formal dinner! Uncle, why do you love White people so

much?)

I want to get angry instead of feeling sad

Rub me off with those rage!

Ahmed, hooks, Charruters, Cooper, Alisa,

Help me to ignite my rage!

"Finland's education is amazing, one of the best in the world"

"Um, Sir, it is relatively ethnically homogeneous country? (I'm talking like American White

now, ending my sentence with question mark)"

Headline:

These are the happiest countries in the world:

(Well, what do you know, the predominantly White nations winning again)

But here I am, watching Seinfeld,

Listening to Alanis Morissette,

Reading Bella DePaulo

Creating assessment guided by Popham and Bloom

I am still addicted to these White (nonsense)

It's hard to say goodbye

"We have to deal with our inferiority complex, it's not their faults," pings my phone's group chat

"What did the White people ever do to you? Do you have terrible experience and encounter with

them?"

Colonization, genocide, slavery, neo-colonization, hegemony, racism, microaggressions,

systematic oppressions, wars; but sure, they're the good ones!

But here I am in the country

I came here partly due to my affinity towards the Whiteness

Now that I no longer have it

(Or do I? I need to doubt myself; I'm used to it)

Should I gleefully leave and never come back?

(sigh), "bule"

(sigh), me

I'll reach my moment of Zen one day

Today is not the day

I wrote the poem in the coursework on Feminist Theories and Methodologies, proving that only when I acknowledged the state of my colonial consciousness was I able to arrive at the second theme of this thesis: feminism (hooks, 2000). Further, through a feminist lens, many of my previous experiences become more natural to connect to pushing against the patriarchal system embedded in the Indonesian education system. I even go as far as to (re)claim feminism as my teaching praxis. Due to my status as an exchange student, I conclude that culturally relevant feminism needs to be conceptualized and explained. This leads to the final purpose of this autoethnography: developing a culturally relevant feminist lens as a teacher. Upon my return to my home institution, I intend to apply these ideas from this thesis and share these ideas with my colleagues when I resume my teaching position.

Feminist Methodology

Through this autoethnographic thesis, I utilize feminist methodology (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002) to narrate my story in making meaning of my teaching and learning experience. I have reclaimed myself as feminist, and "feminists (like all other social researchers) have to establish and defend their claims to knowledge of social life, because there is no certain or absolute knowledge against which the truth of everything can be measured" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 2). The claim for "universal truths" (Bhavnani, 1993) is challenged within the feminist research due to the embedded positivism and androcentricism in the science and social science research (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004). According to Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Yaiser, feminist empiricism challenges the assumptions of traditional empiricism, which is posititivist and androcentrist, in order to eradicate sexism in research. Feminist empiricists contest that the scientific method and objectivity are not immune to the individual biases that are held culture-wide and influence of power structures of androcentric society.

Consequently, feminist empiricism rejects the absolution of objectivity by offering its own definition of objectivity. Feminist objectivity "acknowledges the fact that the researcher is going to bring the influences of society into the project…and can only operate within the limitations of the scientist's personal beliefs and experiences" (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004, p. 13). Feminist empiricism is attentive to the issue of power relations between the researcher and the research subject(s) attached to any research. As a result, the feminists refuse the notion of universal truth because the society is built hierarcharly. On the contrary, the feminists produce the less generalizable knowledge or the partial truth, centralizing women in the research. The feminist methodology then, recognizes the women's multifaceted identities, experiences, and their complex relations such as racism, heterosexism, and nationalism and their complex relations amidst the shared patriarchal issues. In feminist methodology, there are "variations in personal experiences of the complex interrelations of power between women" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 4). Feminism, according to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) is "diverse and decentred," but "entails some claim to common interests between women" (p. 7).

Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) then contested that feminist methodology is "one set of approaches to the problems of producing justifiable knowledge of gender relations" (p. 10). However, feminist methodology recognizes the complexity of the process in making connections between ideas, experiences, and social reality in order to produce justifiable knowledge. In traditional research through scientific method, validity is construed as a way of establishing what counts as true. Feminists however, argue on what counts as valid knowledge, "in the sense of representing reality," and "what counts as reliable knowledge (in the sense of what can be replicated by other researchers" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 13). As a result, feminists can draw on different rules for establishing the validity and realibility of their research.

Feminist methodology underlines how "the power to produce authoritative knowledge is not equally open to all" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 13). The nature and position of power affect the political and ethical implications of epistemology. Understanding the effect of epistemologic power, feminist methodology then promotes the notion that knowledge of social life does not come only from theory or language, but also from the daily life experience. "What people do in everyday life, including researching, teaching or learning, is not seperable from the rest of their lives" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 14). I view that the contestation of integrated epistemologic efforts coined by Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) align with my personal considerations to utilize reflections on my coursework from my learning and experience on teaching as autoethnographic tools to generate knowledge. I too agree that my everyday experience in the classroom as a student in the United States and as a teacher in Indonesia is not seperable from my personal life.

Guiding Questions

Through feminist methodology, I have formulated the following three main questions to guide my narrative for generating knowledge. These questions act as guiding principles to choose which reflections to present in this thesis.

(1) How did my colonial consciousness, in correlation with my multiple statuses and identities, affect my learning process and progress in my Master's program?

(2) Why did I end up choosing the feminist lens as a tool to analyze and understand my experiences?

(3) How do I prepare myself to return to my home country with a reclaimed identity as a feminist teacher? What does it mean to be a culturally relevant feminist teacher in my home institution in Indonesia?

Significance of the Study

This study was expected to add a unique perspective to the already pervasive studies about the learning experiences of the international students in the United States (Berry 2006; Olaya Mesa, 2018; Kuo & Roysircar, 2004; Constantine et al., 2004). While acculturative issues continue to be relevant (Lin, 2012), the shift towards academic impacts on international students' perceptions on their home countries, as well as the attempts to find common grounds in education from their host countries, needs to be elaborated. In the case of exchange students living in host countries that are far more developed than their home country, the issue of inferiority complex should be addressed. This thesis also served as an attempt to provide a feminist lens in dissecting issues surrounding K-12 education, particularly in the sub-fields of teaching methodologies and assessment. Further, it also highlighted the significance and relevance of feminist studies and methodologies in research of K-12 education conducted by teachers who are women and actively teaching. In specific, through feminist methodology, teachers who are women with prior teaching experience before enrolling in a graduate school in educational field can utilize their gendered experience, both personally and professionally, in order to make sense of their experience and generate, possibly, new knowledge.

An Autoethnography of an Exchange Student

The following reflections are the basis of my experience as an exchange graduate student in the School of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University, from August 2017 to December 2018. I wrote these reflections as responses to various courses that I took during the first three semesters of my master's program. I then provide each reflection with brief context and analysis through my feminist lens. These reflections are organized and presented based on the sub-theme of my experiences as guided by the first research question of this thesis.

Multiple Status

August 23, 2017

I was a bit nervous in that class. I have been in the United States for only about two weeks and I must participate in a graduate course conducted in English. Everything was so unfamiliar and I had not been in formal education extensively.

I wrote this short reflection as a response to the first class that I attended in the first semester. The class was dedicated for school leaders such as the principal candidates and vice principals from the nearby district. I plan to become a teacher mentor who is equal to a teacher leader. My motivation for enrolling in the course was simple: the course would be helpful for my career in the future. As this reflection shows, at the beginning of my formal learning, I immediately struggled. I first thought that the long gap between my Bachelor's and Master's program was the main hinderance in the class. Then I experienced another struggle in the following week of the course.

August 30, 2017

I learned many valuable lessons today, both from the experiences in class and from the reading assignment. Even though I am a teacher, I find it impressive how active the classroom discussion was. I have never encountered this kind of class session before. I must admit that I was not as confident as I should have been during the class discussion. I was silent most of the time. It was the mixture of self-consciousness because I barely spoke English back in Indonesia, the adaptation process in facing a completely different setting of a classroom, and the unfamiliarity feeling toward some issues being presented. I have learned so much from my classmates.

In this reflection, I tried to justify my act of silence during the class discussion. I thought it was barely a combination of linguistic, academic, and cultural challenges. I argued that these challenges resulted from my double status as a seasoned teacher and as a new international student coming from a non-English primary speaking country. I noticed that in this effort to defend my struggle, I tried to employ positivity to lift my spirit. Despite having an inferiority complex towards Whiteness, I also tried to avoid mentioning this issue in this reflection. As expected from K-12 teachers in the developing country, we are used to avoiding confrontation, especially if related to sensitive topics like race (Mensah, 2016).

August 29, 2017

Through this diversity course, I hope that I can be enriched with various perspectives and experiences so that I can respond wisely to the apparent diversity among students in my school, and students in Indonesia in general. This could also lead to finding the most effective teaching methods and approaches in my class.

This was a part of my responses for a different course about student diversity, which I also took during the first semester of my program. I was asked to express my personal goal through the course, and I reflected my unique status as an exchange student. I set my own expectation in accord with my sponsor's home country and institution. This sets me apart from international students who want to pursue a graduate degree or a job within the United States.

One Colonial Consciousness

August 30, 2017

Most of lessons in my school are delivered by the teachers and students meekly listening. Now that I am studying here in the United States, and being in the position of a student, I find it

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hard not to act the same way my students do. The norm in my school is that when there are no questions, it is assumed that the students understand, even though their test results are poor.

I attempted another inaccurate approach to defend my silence in the classroom. This reflection was written as a response to one of the lessons in the third course about curriculum in my first semester. It was triggered by a provoking question from our reading. "Do challenging conversations happen among our students?" (Eisner, 2015). The tone of this reflection expresses my frustration towards the educational system in my home country. I placed blame on Indonesia's educational system, and I considered this as a primary cause of my own classroom engagement. Instead of focusing on the differences between the two countries, I ended up disproportionally valuing my host country more than my home country. I pathologized the ongoing educational efforts taking place in Indonesia and I decided that it had failed me based on my struggles in an American-style graduate classroom.

October 30, 2017

We were talking before the other two group members finally arrive and then she stopped talking with me. She swiftly averted her attention to them. It was supposed to be a group project, but I did not feel like part of the group at all. It was probably my broken English. During our interview with our resource, our interviewee seemed concerned after finding out that I am an international student. "Can you understand my explanation? Do you speak fluent English?" she asked me directly in the middle of the interview. I thought my English was good enough. My internet-based TOEFL score was 98, almost 100, but apparently in conversational English the quality does not match the numbers. I am terrible at this. Why could I not speak up? Why can I not keep up? But also, why did everyone keep talking like I was not there?

This happened during the interview preparation and process for our group project in one of my three courses. We were assigned as a group by our course's instructor. As described in my reflection, the language barrier seemed to remain as my constant challenge. However, when I shared the story with one of my international-student friends in the following month, her response opened my mind. I described the event and my response that it was probably due to my lack of English and my introverted personality. The combination of both led to my struggle in participating in the dynamic conversations among the American students. She quickly dismissed my hypothesis. "I understand you just fine," she affirmed me, "your English, our English, is not the problem, their insensitivity is," she continued. "They simply ignored you in plain sight," she concluded. Her encouragement helped me to stop being too hard on myself. On the other hand, I also have similar conversations with my Indonesian friends who joined me on this campus later in August 2018. We agreed that we have more confidence in speaking English with each other than when we talk with our White American peers. We did not have a name at that time, but we just agreed that it was about the different levels of self-consciousness in the two contexts. I now argue it is related to our inferiority complex towards Whiteness. Henry and Tator (2006) define the term "Whiteness" as the "culture, norms, and values in all these areas become normative natural," and how "they become the standard against which all other cultures, groups, and individuals are measured and usually found to be inferior" (p. 46-47). By making connection with our experience and consciousness with the definition of Whiteness, I am now able to see how our perception on English barrier indicates our colonial consciousness, internalized through years of experiences and encounters within our home country. My colonial consciousness directed me to view Whiteness as the standard to proper English, among other things, including

the educational system. It seems like everything they do; they do it better. My version of completing the same task appears inferior.

Finding Common Grounds

Towards the end of the semester, each coursework that I was enrolling in required students to write final paper. As an exchange student, I immediately chose Indonesia as the context to my essay. I then attempted to find common grounds between my host and home countries as shown in the following reflections.

November 27, 2017

"...many educators in classrooms and schools feel that they have become pawns in the reformers' and policy makers' propaganda game that insists there is a single best way to change the system of American schools" (Glickman, 2014). How accurate is this statement! Although I am not a teacher in any school here in the United States, I can relate to this statement because the similar debate has been going on in Indonesia for years of my experience as a high school teacher. I have been a pawn! The politics of education has eaten me inside, slowly. Turning me into a dummy that operates on routines. On the other hand, this led me to my skeptical being. What can powerless teachers do amidst power game continually going on in the hierarchy?

This reflection implies my acknowledgement of how my multiple status and identities differentiated me from my American classmates. However, as I slowly detached from my inferiority-complex mentality, I started to see similarities. Rather than thinking of my home country as less, I began to understand that my host country has similar struggles too. In this response to Glickman's (2014) view on the dichotomy of educational reform between standards and diverse students' needs, I was able to make personal and professional connections. I started to adjust with my dual reflective sense as an exchange student.

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November 29, 2017

While Indonesia is a non-English speaking country, hence no English-Language Learners (ELL) group, more than half of the students' population speak two languages -their ethnic group's language and national language, Bahasa Indonesia or Indonesian-, and these students generally struggle in learning the third language, one of the core subjects, English. However, bilingual students are considered standard in Indonesia, and there is no method of categorizing students based on this aspect.

Here, I attempted a different approach to analyze my initial learning challenge related to my language barrier. I conducted this reflection at the end of my first semester through a slow process of decolonizing my mind. Eventually, I arrived at the self-acknowledgment of Indonesia's uniqueness and even embraced it. Similar to most of my students' condition in rural Sumatra, English is also my third language. Challenges for multi-lingual students are bound to arise in this situation. On the other hand, most of my American classmates are monolingual, and they openly admit this fact. Meanwhile, the majority of my international-student peers studied English as a second language. This reflection has helped me to move beyond my linguistic challenge by accepting the realization that the challenge is consequential. I started to not be so hard on myself. By doing so, I was able to begin moving forward to deal with other issues in my learning process.

March 1, 2018

The United States and Indonesia give different results for Program for International Assessment (PISA) from time to time, in which the former nation ranks much higher than the latter. However, compared to other developed countries, the United States' average score is generally lower. Indonesia scores relatively lower among the participating developing countries

as well. A comparison approach between two countries that gives a relatively similar rank among their respective peers like the United States and Indonesia has not ever been attempted. Why? This needs further investigation!

In the second term of my program, I was finally able to focus on finding common grounds between my host and home country. I wrote this reflection as a brainstorming effort to create a proposal for one of my courses in educational research. The process of attempting to find common grounds between my home and host countries gave me an academical excitement.

The Dissonance between Pedagogical Theories and Realities

March 5, 2018

In chemistry, performance assessment is often linked to students' skills during and after experiment activity. Lab worksheet is one of my favorite tools due to its practicality. To be completely honest, however, I barely write any rubric for my lab worksheet. I have the rubric "written in my head" while grading students' lab worksheet and my colleagues at the same school do the same. Rubrics are not mandatory for teachers before the assessment is designed.

I wrote this reflection in response to the demand for rubric creation in the classroom. I support Popham's (2014) works and perspective on assessment. He continually argues for objectivity in designing assessment. However, I noticed how objectivity is not the whole story when it comes to student evaluation. The more diverse the class demography is, the harder it is to create an objective assessment. The critique of conventional objectivity has also been one of the constant works within the feminist methodology (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004). The subject as well the object of knowledge, who are my students in this context, should be critically examined. Due to the diversity of my students, the examination of their varied identities and

experiences becomes a complicated struggle. Consequently, when teachers attempt to create an objective assessment item, the claimed objectivity is in fact subjugated to their own perspective.

March 21, 2018

I firmly believe in constructivist principles. I agree that students can construct knowledge by themselves, but chemistry has the novelty factor that makes most of my students feel uncomfortable with the subject. So, on one hand, it would be interesting to let the students find what chemistry is on their own. Self-learning is self-construct. Unfortunately, constructivist chemistry is not viable in my school. We do not have the adequate learning resources and technology.

I have struggled with the application of learning theories to my own pedagogical approaches since I began graduate school. As my response to Schunk's (2016) constructivism shows here, the theories often do not bode well with my pedagogical realities. In Indonesia, constructivism is gaining popularity in science education, chemistry included (Nowinska, 2014). Hoever, my fellow Indonesian teachers and I, at least based on my experience and observation in my home institution, struggle to implement this learning theory.

Moving Beyond the Superficial Understanding

August 29, 2018

United States curriculum critics started as early as in the 1935s. How come there has not been any significant response? Further, why has not there been any meaningful transformation? Thoughts: (1) White people actively worked to exclude communities of color within the curriculum; (2) the master narrative enacted and maintained by the white males; (3) the term "white pride" does not exist because it merely relies on the skin tone alone. There is something else than just "pride." As for the Indigenous peoples, I have many intriguing thoughts related to

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the following quotes. "Strength and resilience of Native Nations as they resisted and survived the inculcations of Whiteness and Christianity on their identities," "English language is the colonizers' language," and "the colonizers stripped Native children of their identities as Indians." On the topic about early Chinese American and Japanese American curricular discourse, Au, Brown, and Calderón (2016) contend that Asian people were positioned and abused as cheap labor after slavery was formally made illegal. This is eye-opening.

I wrote these thoughts to respond to a reading assigned through the only doctoral-level course that I took in my Master's program. I had never read any book that so boldly challenged my prior superficial conceptions about the American education system. Au, Brown, and Calderón (2016) present their challenge of the American master's curriculum through curricular discourse approach. I remember feeling like I was lifted out of the grey area, moved into the tragic history and lingering struggles of the minority groups in my host country. I thought I knew the United States, but turned out that it was the sanitized version, the White America, that I was familiar with due to my encounters with the White American popular cultures back in Indonesia.

September 7, 2018

I couldn't help but pondering on how I, despite the differences between the United States and Indonesia settings have participated in the act of subtracting my students' context. There were many frustrating moments that led me to blame and silence them instead of listening to their stories and troubles. I have experienced that the Indonesian curriculum has been silencing the minority groups by its strong encouragement on practices and values held by the specific religious group. If the master narrator in the American curriculum is White men, I am tempted to parallel their equivalence to the Javanese Muslim men in Indonesian curriculum. Javanese Muslim men belong in the dominant ethnicity and religion group in a diverse Indonesia, which

puts them under the same lens of the critiques as the White men in America. Another influence

instilled by the Javanese Muslim men is shown by demanding that the Indonesian national

curriculum must be adopted by all schools. Although the curriculum has been revised multiple

times, not once does it address the challenges bilingual students might face in their early

education, particularly in rural areas where the dominant spoken language is the local native

language. At least here in the United States, discussions, debates, and research are leading

toward the direction of improvement. While acknowledging that privilege is still uncomfortable

for some people in the dominant group, I find it interesting that some of the biggest critiques

come from the dominant group itself. I wonder if that ever happens in my country. Maybe this

conversation could start with me, despite my minority background, by taking one small step out

of the thousands I might need to do what Au, Brown, and Calderón did: challenge the master's

narrative!

This reflection is quite telling. As an exchange student with prior teaching experience, I

was getting used to conducting comparative reflections on the issue. Hierarchy is omnipresent,

regardless of the context, setting, or location. There is a similarity in terms of how the one in

control is men from the dominant group within each country, either the United States or

Indonesia. Patriarchy as a system is everywhere (hooks, 2004) and in this case is arguably

utilized as a logic in Indonesia's K-12 curriculum.

September 12, 2018

How eye-opening this statement is! "*School curriculum became a prominent space to*

reproduce ideas about Blacks as inferior, violent, uneducated, and intellectually dim-witted,"

and how "not only did textbooks provide inaccurate depictions of the past, they also advanced

problematic theories about Black temperament and psyche." Now that I think about it, even my

own Indonesian relatives living here in the United States did "warn" me about Chicago's

stereotypes of black crime. When "all of the communities" are supposed to "contend with White

supremacy, racism, xenophobia, and nationalism in various forms—and all within a context of

settler colonialism as well." It is getting overwhelming!

In the same book written by Au, Brown, and Calderón (2016), I continued to be taken

aback by their persistent effort in challenging the United States school curriculum. As revealing

as this lesson was, I was not able to make the connection how the identities of Au, Brown, and

Calderón (2016) who are not White men to be one of the reasons they were confrontational about

discoursing the master curriculum: addressing the systemic racial inequalities built into the

American educational system. Through my current feminist lens I am also able to see how anti-

Blackness is embedded in the United States as contested by Au, Brown, and Calderón (2016).

The master's curriculum constantly excludes the works of people of color (Carruthers, 2018) and

as a result, the curriculum does not work for the Black students as it was not designed for them.

Rather, it was exclusively designed for the White students. This realization motivated me to

thinking that if the United States educational system consistently fails the Black students, then I

should be critical in considering of adopting it to my home country. I need to shift my focus to

my Indonesia's own context and struggle so I can develop a more relevant approach in

improving my students' learning and my own teaching. The realization of the need to return to

my home country's as a site delivered me to the contestation of decolonizing education.

Decolonizing Education

November 16, 2018

I found the term: decolonizing education. How did I not see this until now? Indonesia is a

developing ex-colonized country. The colonization in Indonesia officially ended in 1945; it does

not mean the colonial practices and policies vanish, does it? Even here in the United States, they still argue about it, but it is due to the different types of colonialism between the two countries. In Indonesia, the colonizers left, but in America, the colonizers became the masters. Is comparative reference relevant here? And how did Patel seem to know my struggle? She wrote in 2016, "For anyone who is fascinated by the mystifying and quixotic nature of learning, places of formal schooling present an almost constant mixture of promise and heartbreak." I have experienced many heartbreaks! There have been many revelations throughout my time in the United States and I have had to (un)learn parts of the process due to these revelations! If the United States, one of the leading countries in the world, still struggles to make learning relevant again, my home country Indonesia needs to take its time. I should not be discouraged by the amount of time it has taken for change to take place.

I remember finding the term "decolonizing education" in the American context for the first time in one of Patel's book (2016). Patel sees Whiteness as the master narrative within the United States curriculum as well by focusing the colonial lingering impact on education within the community of the Indigenous people. As (settler) colonizers, the Whitness systemmatically creates the gap between learning and formal schooling as a colonial tactic to instill and maintain power among the Indigenous people of the United States. Patel continues her argument, seeing that the academic research and assessment are created and utilized through colonialism-based hierarchy. I struggled, however, in making a relevant connection about decolonization between the United States and Indonesia due to the different types of colonization occurred in each country. In Indonesia, our colonizers left, however, our affinity and inferiority complex towards the Whiteness stays. Nonetheless, I began to internalize my unlearning and learning process about United States history and its implications on education.

November 6, 2018

I think I am understanding decolonizing education or at least I am getting close due to this literature review. One of the critical patterns in Indonesia's national curriculum for K-12, particularly science education, includes the perpetuation of western values and ideas that are generally perceived better than our own. While the motives behind this inferiority complex attitude are usually genuine for the advancement of our education, the results do not necessarily reflect the education policy makers' intentions, as shown by the data on Indonesia's rankings in various international educational assessment. (Remember PISA?) Consequently, there is disproportional blame directed at us, the teachers. Should not these exhaustive efforts be dedicated to evaluating our curricular approach and theory instead? Space for multicultural knowledge is arguably significant for internalization process in developing countries as it could be a counter narrative for our inferiority mentality. The author brought up how globalization also demands innovations in science, but then suggested that developing countries that are "still learning to recognize and direct our indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing" (Boisselle, 2016). Any developing country could find these imperatives to be overwhelming. The author critiqued how the push for innovations and to bridge the gap between developing and developed countries, the former tends to cut and paste from the latter, as a result of a disrupted and unfinished internalization. This phenomenon is also highly evident in Indonesia's education policy. Rather than going global, Boisselle then suggested using "community focus or place-based practice in science" as it is consistent with the nature of local science in a multicultural nation.

I was finally able to see that just because the colonizers left Indonesia in the 1950s, it does not necessarily mean that colonization was over. Boisselle's argument (2016) got my

attention on globalization, the neo-colonization in the current modern days. Ex-colonized developing countries then continue to face colonialism with different names. In global perspective, these nations are perceived as less rather than different. The standards for educational assessments are set to meet the global expectations, when it only means for the developing countries to catch up with the developed countries (Boisselle, 2016).

Are These Dispersed Issues Connected?

December 1, 2018

Am I doing this right? I ended up championing for decolonizing education. In the first semester, I was passionate about women and issues about religion. Now, the big questions revolve around racial groups. How do I make the connection with all of these different ideas? Is there any connection at all? Which one should be the priority? Is there a priority? Is it that or this? I need to understand. For now, I am attracted to these three issues: decolonizing education, religion, and feminism. I will finalize my thesis proposal utilizing these three terms. Side note: I finally acknowledged my inferiority complex. I am still working on it though, as the internalization went on for so long. To undo this programing also requires a long time of unlearning what I had come to know. Nonetheless, there is progress.

I thought that the three issues that I highlighted in the reflections could hardly be connected. However, when I enrolled in a feminist class in January 2019, I started to see the possibility of connection among decolonizing education, religion, and feminism in K-12 education setting.

CHAPTER II: BECOMING A FEMINIST TEACHER

Through the learning process and experiences in my Master's program, I have come to acknowledge the multi-faceted issues within the American education system, and I have attempted to make connections to the Indonesian education system. Specifically, from August to December 2018, I engaged in a highly critical discourse of the master narrative of the U.S. curriculum. Through the course, I ended up finding the conception of decolonizing education which is relevant for my home country Indonesia. However, issues of gender became a lost cause for me as I was grappling with the depth of the complex issues surrounding the United States context. In the diversity course that I took in the first semester during August to December 2017, I reflected on issues of gender in education. For a week, I intensely wrote reflections to respond to a related reading from the class' assigned textbook (Banks & Banks, 2016).

I considered the conception and praxis of decolonizing the education worth revisiting while bringing in my initial concerns about various issues of gender in K-12 education. I wanted to make a case about how the lack of accurate language and terms made me struggle to process and make meaning of the gendered experience through a holistic approach. Previously I was able to analyze the issue, but I did it in a limited and localized context. I did not view patriarchy as a system. As a result, I invariably ended up with viewing gender-related issues as a separate issue. The topic of gender only occurs when it specifically focuses on issues on gender alone. Rather than view and reflect my learning and experiences through a holistic approach, I saw things in dicotomies: it was either one or the other, but not multiple causes. It was either about race, language, culture, or gender. My binary thinking supported this praxis as well. The following reflections examplify how binary thinking led me to oversimplify the gender-related issues in education and my daily life.

Initial Reflections on Issues of Gender

September 8, 2017

I think gender-related issues in education should be looked through many perspectives. In Indonesia, religion and ethnicity remain the main promotor of these issues. Most Indonesian people would agree with the statement that men are superior to women because that is what God tells us. We also have been told the same by our individual ethnic group's values too.

In my first reflection about gender, I acknowledged the multi-faceted sources for gender issues in education. However, I did not consider it as an overall system. Instead, I merely viewed it as one out of the many issues. Through feminist take however, this reflection highlights how patriarchy is embedded within institutions, including organized religions.

September 9, 2017

I remember that I received similar "warning" from my educator colleagues, when she found out that I would be pursuing my graduate education in the United States. "No man will want to marry you if your education level is too high!" she said, "and I honestly don't salute you for any of your achievements if you're still not married. With men, it's okay, they're men, they're bound to get a higher education, but us women, we got biological clocks that are ticking out." When one of my aunts uttered similar complaint, I could shrug it off, but this woman was my colleague. She was a teacher like me. Of course, I know enough not to let this perspective of hers affect any of my life decisions, but I cannot say the same thing if she shares it with any of our students.

This reflection revolves around the cultural expectation of an Indonesian woman. I was not able to make that connection, however, and as a result, I acted bitterly towards my colleague. I saw this as a personal experience, not realizing that it was connected to something more

substantial. I had not yet encountered the feminist lens in this reflection, so I could not identify this experience for what it was: heteropatriarchy within the Indonesian culture. Heteropatriarchy is defined by Smith (2006) as a social hierarchy that heterosexual marriage is the only viable and acceptable path to build a family as an institution. As a result, heteropatriarchy deems other types of marriage as less, creating a hierarchy within the social realities. Heteropatriarchy, like patriarchy, operates through the dominance of men, assuming men as inherently dominant as opposed to women (hooks, 2004).

September 10, 2017

Issues of gender bias did not motivate the change in our curriculum in 2013, but yes, it has helped the girls to achieve better at my school. However, similar to the United States, in Indonesia, men still dominate in higher education.

While this reflection is short, its implication may lead to asking why issues of gender in my school never were part of the conversation. In general, the girls at my school perform better academically than the boys. It is tempting then to dismiss discussions about girls' rights for higher education when they seem to perform well at my school.

September 13, 2017

My high school is located in one of the rural areas in Indonesia, in which a particular group ethnic, Batak Toba, dominates. In Batak Toba, men are seen as the dominant gender. Through each historical era, men have been perceived as the protector of the women and children. In our traditional practices, men are the leaders of each cultural event. Thus, the stereotypical qualities in Bataknese men include being harsh, proud, and violent for the sake of this so-called pride. I can see how this view about men in my ethnic group contributes to the different reactions between male and female teachers in my school when dealing with students

who do not follow our school's rules. Female teachers will want to have a conversation, while male teachers conduct an interrogation. Female teachers tend to sympathize, using their maternal instinct, while male teachers will bark at the students to get them to be truthful. I do not want to generalize, because in my school, there are some strict female teachers and some male teachers who prefer negotiation as opposed to confrontation.

This reflection shows how my ethnic group contributes to the cultural expectation of men in my school. It also highlights the hierarchy explicitly assigned to gender in which Batak men are perceived and appreciated more than our women. This is plain sexism, internalized through our daily life on feeding on stereotypes and biases of women. I also made a connection to how it affected teachers who are men, or male-teachers as I called it back then since I had not learned about the terms at the time of this reflection, who operate and behave at our school related to their interactions with our students. However, I did acknowledge, that normativity is not the ultimate cause. I ended this reflection by providing different narratives about teachers at my school who defy the expectations.

September 14, 2017

There was one time in my school when a group from my class started a fight with a group from another class. My class defended their actions, claiming that some of the boys from the other class were teasing one or two girls from my class. The girls felt so uncomfortable and yelled back at them. Then, some of the boys from my class "stepped up." So, using their words, they were actually defending "their" girls. I wondered if media exposure, in this case, teenage romance movies, had influenced my students' perspective about their genders. The incident I mentioned happened when the "Twilight" movie was such a hit among teenagers in Indonesia, including my students. And the way this primary male character was portrayed as the protector

of his girlfriend. The female character seemed to enjoy this which was perceived as a form of affection. I even called it sweet and romantic at that time. I ended up siding with my class, though I still put them in detention. Now, under the perspective of gender equity, I wonder if this kind of "protection" is actually another form of gender-based action because it implies that as if the woman was a weaker gender who needed protection, and sadly, in the form of violence enacted by men.

This reflection above describes my vague attempt to dissect sexism practices found in my school. Through the connection of what was trending at that time, it also shows that sexism is a worldwide issue because it is embedded within the institutionalized organizations, from family, to church, and school. In a way, it is systematic, infused throughout everyday life and pop culture. Once more, this indicates that I did not have the accurate vocabulary to call it out for what it is: sexism.

September 15, 2017

I am thinking about a friend of mine who was pregnant with her third child. She was excited when she found out that she was going to have a girl. "Finally!" she exclaimed. Her first two children are boys. She argued that having a girl means that, "There will be a girl who could help me around the house doing chores. A girl I could dress up with pretty clothes. A girl who would obey everything I would say and plan for her. She will be nothing like those two boys!" Now that I think of it, girls are already expected to be more obedient than boys even before they are born. Then these girls are raised in a way so that they can live up to those expectations. This phenomenon is also projected in my school. When male students fight, teachers will make comments similar to "boys will be boys." When female girls do the same, the teachers will be shocked, trying our best to figure out why those who fighting are not fulfilling their view of how

girls are supposed to be nicer than boys. Teachers in my school would examine the female

students' uniforms thoroughly every single day, making sure they comply with our school dress-

code. Any female student who got caught wearing a skirt too short would quickly be judged as

promiscuous. I now see how these practices are mostly based on what our society expects from a

girl: to be well-behaved and not cause any trouble. On the other hand, our culture also has a set

of conduct about what to expect from a male student. Boys who have soft spoken voice or show

their feminine sides, might face ridicule not only from their peers, but even also from some

teachers. These students might be called out as unnatural or "banci," a term in our language

that has a similar meaning to "gay" and "trans man."

The above reflection gives another example of how sexism operates in my daily life and

throughout my native educational system. This also highlights the way gender is a social

construction, siding with the gender binary and condemning the non-conforming as others. The

stereotypical expectations then dictate our way of policing and labelling the students based on

their gender. It is also an example of how women, who are in the position of power as teachers,

can be sexist to our female students. Teachers who are women, however, belong to our

educational institution. Heteronormativity "describes the processes through which social

institutions and social policies reinforce the belief that human beings fall into two distinct

sex/gender categories: male/man and female/woman" (Queen, Farrell, & Gupta, 2004, p. 3). As a

consequence, it is belived that the two sexes/genders complement their respective roles and that

intimate relationships only exist between the binary. Heteronormativity operates within

institution and our school is not an exception. On a note about boys who do not meet the

expectations of how they should behave, I could not call it out accurately. Queer is the term I

was looking for to describe them (Mayo, 2015).

September 16, 2017

I still remember clearly the overhyped comment I directed toward one of the female students in my class who could perform math quickly. The comment implied a shock as if women could not be good at math quickly. I am a chemistry teacher! I have a Bachelor's degree in chemical engineering! And I am that type of woman too!

This reflection was based on my teaching experience in the early days of my career. It is proof of a time when I did not view things holistically, which makes me frustrated as I look back on the exchange. I was confused as to why I expected less from my female students. I did not recognize how internalization of heteronormativity was perpetuated by me despite my personal experience. I did not fulfill the expectations of how women are supposed to pursue their education in the fields of social studies. Why did I still expect the same stereotypical attitude from my female students?

September 17, 2017

I remember discussing a rape victim with my colleagues. A mini-bus driver allegedly raped a female passenger when there were just the two of them inside the bus. One of us pointed out that the woman's clothing was inappropriate because it was described in the news as a "short skirt." Another even joked about it, exclaiming, "Well, she was asking for it!" Together we concluded in a concerned manner, "This is why we need to teach our female students in school to dress appropriately even when they are outside the school." Now I am thinking about this discussion, the patriarchal religious structure of Indonesia, encourages females to dress "properly." A different massage should be delivered rather than victim blaming. Male students should be taught of self-control instead. It is about time for educators in Indonesia to set different perspective that goes beyond religion and ethnic group beliefs.

I call it out: Indonesia is a patriarchal religious country. I was able to grapple with my struggle slowly and move beyond the superficial approach. However, I utilized the term in a somewhat defensive manner rather than being critical.

September 18, 2017

Coming from traditional faith as well as living and teaching in a conservative community, I need to explore and learn more regarding issues of patriarchy embedded in religion so that I can have my eye and mind open.

This last reflection encouraged me to find a course that talks about the issue I was grappling with: patriarchy. I sensed that the issues related to gender and sexual identities are somehow censored similarly with racial issues within the United States. This is demonstrated in the following statement: "Education against homophobia and about sexual-minority issues needs to grapple with cultural and traditional objections to sexual-minority people and communities." (Mayo, 2015, p. 142). I managed to find that course. It leads me to undestanding what feminism is and what it is not about. It helps me to see things in a more holistic approach. It opens my eyes to see how patriarchy is a system instead of a single issue.

Towards a Feminist Lens

My reflections showed my struggle when I did not have the vocabulary to make meaning of my experience related to gender-related issues. I frequently faced sexism embedded in the fondness towards the patriarchy. Through my daily life as a woman teacher in school and outside of the school, I witnessed and internalized the way heteronormative patriarchy dictated the Indonesian society. I internalized these experiences. As a result, it is going to take years to unlearn my binary thinking. On the one hand, I was able to notice the stereotypes embedded in gender and on the other hand, I continued to utter sexist comments to other girls and women. At

some point, I needed to stop being duplicitous. My perspective had been shifted through a construed lens that had the potential to see things holistically yet acknowledge the particularity of each experience and struggle. I found a feminist lens to connect all the significant experience I had prior to and during my Master's coursework.

Feminism

Feminism appeals to me because it is intersectional (hooks, 1984), acknowledging the experience of people of various identities and backgrounds (Smith, 2006). However, it focuses on the system, rather than attempts to attack the individual (hooks, 2004). As a theory, it is rooted in the assumption that the current world we live in operates through socio-political, cultural, economic order that creates unjust and inequitable conditions for women (McCann & Kim, 2010). McCann and Kim (2010) argue that this system must be changed through strategies committed to ending all types of oppressions. McCann and Kim (2010) further contest that feminism struggles for the liberation of all human beings. By utilizing diverse intellectual tools, feminism acknowledges that each feminist struggle is unique and contextual. However, it aims for collective liberation and argues for the liberation of the marginalized, of the people who do not fit in the heteronormativity (Combaha River Collective, 1986).

As a methodology, feminism argues for alternatives for epistemology (McCann & Kim, 2010). Feminism challenges the binary way of thinking infused in academic research. Throughout history, the majority of the knowledge is produced by White men (Hubbard, 2003). Feminism contests for a different approach in generating knowledge. Experiences and bodies become valid vessels to understand our life and its phenomenon (Moore, 2018). Rather than being dictated by the theories built by the oppressor, the oppressed reclaim their place in the making of meaning in their identities, status, experiences, and stories (Lorde, 1984, 2007).

Autoethnography, the methodology of this thesis, is strongly connected with the feminist methods (Ellis 2004; Walls 2006).

Reflections on Feminist Theories and Methodologies

I could have learned about these gender-related issues on my own without having to take a single course. However, in this era where resources are abundant, a lens must be utilized to select and process the information and knowledge. As an example, when I tried to do research independently, I ended up being overwhelmed by White feminism, the feminism that does not recognize the complicated racial issues women of color carry within them (Vron, 1992). As a result, I focused on the issues of gender alone, as if it is not connected to other struggles embedded in different identities such as race, socioeconomic status, religion, or sexual orientation. My reflections from one of my Master's courses as described in Chapter 1 of this thesis illuminate that tendency. I sensed that I somehow stumbled upon another sanitized version of knowledge and praxis just like the experience with the United States history and education system. Eventually, I was encouraged to take the Feminist Theory and Methodologies course. Like my other courses, I wrote reflections to respond to this study some of which are shared below.

January 22, 2019

As a teacher, I was comfortable in applying the traditional pedagogic theories about students, rather than channeling my students' experiences to build a different conception and theory of learning. I viewed objectivity above the experiences of student, without being critical of the White patriarchal perspective that was the foundation of these educational theories. I salute Ahmed's tactic not to cite any White men, but I am genuinely concerned about not being able to have that option. I teach chemistry, one branch of science. Science, Western science to be

accurate, has a long and strong connection with the male bodies. Then again, I am a novice and

I am willing to take the challenge as Ahmed suggested. I will assemble my own kit to prepare

myself as a feminist science teacher, as feminism does not only strive for content, but also the

way of the content is delivered.

In reflecting on Ahmed's (2017) introduction to her book, "Living the Feminist Life," I felt the connection I did not have in my prior learning contexts. Both my personal and professional struggles as a high school chemistry woman teacher in Indonesia were addressed simultaneously. In a class that is presumed only about studies of women and gender, through my identity, a chain linking science subject to feminism is created.

January 24, 2019

I am very much familiar with unhappiness and grief these days. I am still grappling with

the unsanitized version of the United States, my dream country from my childhood. Its reality

about its history and inheritance in racism, sexism, and white supremacism. Then, I finally

committed not to bear any child. I wept because, as Ahmed (2017) explained grief is the result of

mourning for the loss of option. As I was growing up and in my adult friendships, I was

continually told that women who do not have the experience of bearing a child are not true

women. The past two years had I been screaming in the back of my head, "Then to hell with

womanhood!" Although the reasoning behind my reproductive choice is mainly rooted in the

issue of overpopulation and its contribution to climate change, Ahmed's (2017) perspective in

challenging the norms of being the women became a tool in my survival kit. I am the master of

my own body, but I know, as Ahmed described her experience, eventually I will return to that

"table" once I complete my Master's program here and return to Indonesia. I grieved and

teared up imagining the scenario of the conversation that will take place, the accusation and the

"concern" that will be addressed regarding my choice. Ahmed had the luxury of claiming a new

life, but I have yet to return to my previous one. I am not even interested in marriage, but I know

and I can predict that my family and my extended family, along with my colleagues at my home

institution, will be so eager to find me a husband that suits me. I am still not done processing, or

maybe never will, this new way of revisiting the significant, bitter events of my past. I cried a lot

reading this chapter; I wept. This risk of vulnerability keeps holding me back when I write and

tell my whole story on the journey of being a feminist learner. I will get there, I know, but maybe

today is not the day. In the meantime, I will embrace my unhappiness, as happiness is overrated

and misdirected anyway.

I remember that I did cry when writing this reflection. In the middle of my realization of

having to unlearn the sanitized version of the United States I was familiar with; I came to confess

about my thoughts on childbearing and happiness. I consider this necessary and relevant due to

the stereotypical woman teacher figure in their 30's in my home country. We are supposed to be

married already, mother of a kid or two, and smoothly balancing our life as a teacher and a

housewife. However, the hierarchy goes from a mother, then spouse, and then our teaching

career. A woman teacher who does not meet these expectations ends up being bullied as I have

experienced for the past several years. We are accused of being unhappy. I internalized all these

words, and I thought that I was unhappy, so unhappy to the point I considered leaving the

profession. Then Ahmed (2017) talked to me through her experience.

January 29, 2019

In Indonesia, we have a specific term in our national language to refer to the White

people: "bule." "Bule" is often spoken of with affinity. When Indonesians talk about the Western

countries, the United States included, we generally think of "bule," not so much acknowledging

the diversity of one of the most diverse countries in the world. Getting married to a "bule" is considered an achievement and a standard one needs to pass to be upgraded to a higher class without proving their financial status. Proximity to a "bule" is viewed as a privilege. I had no idea about White privilege and/or supremacy nor of my own inferiority complex toward Whiteness. Schools in my home country have leverage once they hire an English native speaker as an English teaching assistant. However, what we mean by "native" is "bule." As if proper English is only possible to come out of the mouths of the Whites. I was complicit in this as I was and still am grappling with my inferiority complex. I was in the process of bargaining with a United States institution so my school could have a native English speaker placed in our school as English teaching assistant when I found out that this American had a unique and seemingly non-White surname. I remember cautioning my school's English teachers that this candidate might not be "bule." It turned out that he was a "bule." My colleague soon commented in relief and glee, "Oh, he is a "bule"!" I now acknowledge my compliance in the alienation of nonwhite Americans through this experience.

On the other hand, I grew up with the continuous exposure of the American popular culture through TV shows, movies, and music dominated by Whiteness. In a graduate class that I took last semester, we were talking about this video our professor showed us. It was about a made-up reversed racial role in Australia, in which the colonizers switched place with the Aborigines. One of my classmates then responded, "But is White supremacy also a thing in Australia like it is here in the United States?" I remember responding by pointing out the inferiority complex toward Whiteness even made its way to developing countries like Indonesia. I shared my experience of being pointed out and laughed at when talking in our national language, Bahasa Indonesia, with the accent of my ethnic language, Batak Toba, my first

language. I was quickly interrogated, "Are you Batak?" Once their stereotype on my ethnic group was confirmed, they burst into laughter. However, whenever a "bule" has a Youtube channel on speaking our national language in the manner similar to my ethnic people's accent. The response, however, is different. If I was laughed at, the "bule" is applauded. My old self would not even notice this, so I suppose I am progressing. I am a feminist work in progress.

Through this comparative narrative, I was able to find a connection between my personal inferiority-complex mentality with the global system that favors Whiteness. I finally claimed myself for the first time as a feminist through this reflection.

February 5, 2019

I thought I was crazy when I was continuously feeling uncomfortable in most courses that I took in the past. I was the only international student present in most classes. It is not so much about being uncomfortable in the classroom as it is about validating my feelings. I thought I was crazy. I thought I invented the wall. Ahmed's (2017) thoughts in which the sea of Whiteness can be a wall to the student of color like herself resonates with my experience. I wished I found this book sooner. I am not trying to take away the experiences of Black and Brown people as seemingly who Ahmed was talking about in this chapter, but I also have to share my critical view of my inferiority complex towards Whiteness. I suffer from the expectation to catch up with the proper English the Whites are speaking. "Oh, your English is good!" is a comment I now see through Ahmed's lens, similar to her response to the question, "Where are you from?" I think that at a certain point in my first semester in Fall 2017, I gave up and stopped speaking properly. I wanted to fulfill the stereotype. I chose to speak broken English, or I would be silent in most of the classes. I was too tired to switch languages: Batak Toba in the morning with my family through phone and video calls, Bahasa Indonesia with my friends back at home all

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through the afternoon and night on the chatting app, and English in the class and the academic

works. Now I understand why and although it might seem too late, I could start reclaiming my

voice and my broken English.

There is more to my struggle as an exchange student than the language barrier. It is about my inferiority-complex toward the Whiteness resulted from years of internalization. I contend now that my process of dealing with and then getting rid of my inferiority-complex is a decolonizing work itself.

February 19, 2019

As a high school teacher, Carruthers' (2018) encountered a Black feminist teacher,

which she recounts as "I had one black feminist teacher in my first sixteen years of schooling."

This passage is the one passage that I found to be the most fascinating. Just one throughout the

sixteen years, I thought, and I want to hear more about that one teacher Carruthers recalled so

briefly in this chapter. I have been struggling in identifying myself as a feminist teacher, mostly

because I still need to prove my new identity when I return to my institution back in my home

country. Teachers in K-12 education, myself included, are arguably complicit in the oppression

of students by arguing that "we are protecting them." Through reflections on this class, I have

come to admit my complicity.

But further, I am willing to act on my renewed identity. Carruthers concludes this chapter

by claiming that "We are practicing and theorizing as we go," and I find that encouraging

enough for me.

Borrowing Charruter's (2018) approach, I too agree that feminists are practicing and theorizing as we go. This thesis is an attempt to theorize the concept of cultural feminism

teaching. I intend to practice it later when I return to Indonesia. However, first, I need to define what a feminist teacher means.

A Feminist Teacher

The lack of female leadership in educational institutions has been reported (Lennon, 2013). The profession I am aiming for is a teacher mentor and this profession is dominated by men in my school district. This happens even though in both countries, most K-12 teachers are women (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2017; Wong, 2019). However, by utilizing the feminist lens, this contradiction can be challenged as the heteronormativity patriarchy that favors male leadership. Power is assumed to inherently come from the bodies and minds of the men. Through my experience and observation, most men who are in the position of educational leadership in my district started their career as teachers. After two to three years, they left to pursue office jobs. Some of them comment, "I am not going to be stuck in this low-paying job. I am leaving." Eventually, they become decision makers in our education policy, telling the women who stay in the teaching profession what to do. It is the politics of power as construed by feminism. A feminist teacher develops this skill of finding a connection between patriarchy and lack of women leadership in education. Further, I argue that the constant struggle in education, because the policy enacted by these men, does not fit with the realities that they left behind. As a result, rather than only being frustrated with ineffective educational policies, feminist teachers also see the bigger picture: an aim for liberation by challenging the system. Further, they will be passionate to seek the position of leadership so that they can change the system too.

In the institutional level, in this case, school and district, I contend that feminist teachers should be critical about practices that are enacted by the White Supremacist heteropatriarchal capitalist system (hooks, 2004; Smith, 2006). Students' uniforms, sexist comments and

treatments, teachers' hierarchy, teachers' low payment, and teachers' retention are among issues that need to be analyzed through a feminist lens. Feminism commits to ending all types of oppressions, including the ones found in the life of students and teachers. Feminism can be utilized as a lens and praxis. It potentially leads teachers to be sensitive about the ongoing oppression happening to them and their students. This feminist sensitivity eventually leads to a critical perspective and acting to end oppression. By focusing on the experiences and struggles of the marginalized and oppressed groups of students embedded in their identities and status, I argue that the liberation process is in place. These are the general principles that can be adopted in all situation and location.

In the United States, feminists call out the oppressive system as White Supremacist Capitalist Heteropatriarchy (hooks, 2004; Smith, 2006), and in Indonesia, the system is yet to be named. Due to the latter country's unique geographical feature, there are hundreds of ethnic and native religious groups dispersed throughout its thousands of islands. Consequently, the culture differs from one location to another, relying on specific demography of that region. For example, in Java, the dominant group has two identities: Java ethnicity and Islam as the religion. In rural Sumatra where my home institution is located, however, the dominant group shifts to Batak Toba ethnicity who are Christian. Nonetheless, patriarchy is commonly endorsed by most religious and ethnic teachings and philosophy. For that reason, I consider feminism that is culturally relevant as the praxis for teachers in Indonesia, the patriarchal developing ex-colonized country. This feminism acknowledges the patriarchal system while staying aware of the dynamic identities within the country.

CHAPTER III: A CULTURALLY RELEVANT FEMINIST TEACHER

A paradox from the new era in Indonesia was observed and reported by Budiman (2008). He argued that starting from the new era called "Reformasi" (lit. reformation), a period that marked the aftermath of Suharto's regime as the radical Islamic movement strongly holds on to conservative teachings on gender. On the other hand, women's movements inspired by Western feminist philosophy also emerged (Budiman, 2008). Issues of feminism are relevant regarding K-12 education due to the current Indonesian religious curriculum. This issue of gender inequality is arguably common in various religious settings (Seguino & Lovinsky, 2009). In Indonesia, about 64% of K-12 teachers are identified as women (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2017). Counterintuitively, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) pointed out that there are a significant gender gaps in school dropout rates among the students: female students are more likely to drop out of school than their male counterparts (UNICEF Indonesia, 2002).

The latest data released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) further highlighted the extreme gender gap in employment in Indonesia. The report shows through a statistical breakdown on how 91% of men are employed compared to 47% of women among 25 to 34-year-olds in Indonesia (OECD, 2018). It is implied from the data that the issue of gender disparity in education needs to be addressed and discussed through the lens of feminist theory and pedagogy. I argue that K-12 teachers have a pivotal role to respond to this phenomenon going on in the fourth largest country in the world. In a country that views teachers as figures of authority (Mesrabadi, Badri, & Vahedi, 2010), feminist teachers can channel their profession and the everyday practice to motivate the girls in the classroom to pursue higher education. Feminist teachers in Indonesia, however, should be well aware of the patriarchal system as contested by feminism.

A Feminist Lesson Plan

Teachers teach and dedicate most of their working hours in school by teaching students through each of our respective subjects. The classroom is the space where teachers interact and make connections with their students. It is more than a room. It is the location where transformation can take effect, for both the educator and the students. Feminist teachers then need to create a feminist atmosphere within their classroom. A learning condition that encourages the students to acknowledge their cultural and/ or religious background. At the same time, the class does not endorse sexist, suppressive, and oppressive comments or actions toward the minority groups in the classroom. Further, feminist teachers open room for growth for all the students, while paying specific attention to the students who are vulnerable to the patriarchal system. To create, a teacher must design. I consider lesson planning as a powerful tool and function to facilitate a classroom that promotes feminist values. In a wider scale, feminist lesson plans can be seen as a project of decolonization.

Context and Content

Considering that I intend to become a teacher mentor within my school district, I want this feminist work to be as generic as possible. In other words, the principles that I propose should be relevant to all teachers regardless of the lesson that they teach. In Indonesia, the lesson plan is the teacher's prerogative. However, we are guided by the template designed by Indonesia's Department of Education (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2014). Every lesson plan has a similar structure as the following.

(1) Basic Competencies, Indicators, and Content: Formulated and assigned by the Department of Education, this part is unique to each subject, grade, and lesson unit. Neither schools or teachers have the authority to modify this aspect of lesson plan.

(2) Learning Procedures: This is the part that leaves room for teachers to work on and adjust. Depending on their skills and perspective, teachers can create the best learning conditions for their students so they can achieve the learning goals as indicated in part (1). There are three sub-parts to this content:

   i.   Anticipatory set: orientation, apperception, motivation, reference in Indonesia, the current K-12 curriculum is considered as religious curriculum (Suhadi, Tahun, Budi, & Sudarto, 2015). This means that it is encouraged to start (orientation), and end (closing) the lesson with prayers. Taking attendance and checking the students' appearance, including uniforms, is also part of the orientation session. As for the apperception, motivation, and reference are generally utilized to prepare students for the content. However, it is common for teachers to extend these areas to non-formal content to connect with the students or to break the ice. The anticipatory set usually takes about five to fifteen minutes of the ninety-minute session.

   ii.   Main activities: the teachers utilize their choice of teaching methodology in delivering the lesson content. This usually takes up most time allocation up to seventy minutes of ninety-minute session.

   iii.   Closing: concluding the lesson, assessment as scheduled, plan for the next lesson, and closing prayer. This part usually takes up about five to fifteen minutes of ninety-minute session.

(3) Assessment: This is also the prerogative of the teacher. It is determined by the nature of the subject, the cognitive category and student's mastery of the lesson unit and content and school's facility

(4) Media, Tools, and Resources: Although this is also another area for teachers to decide themselves, based on my experience, this part strongly relies on the school's facilities and resources.

The Principles for the Culturally Relevant Feminism Infused in Lesson Plan

The principles that I am formulating in this last chapter are dedicated to teachers. Thus, out of the four parts of the lesson plan, only part (1) that will not be addressed because the national level dictates it. As a result, part (2), (3), and (4) provide rooms for feminist principles. However, due to the novelty of this proposal and to avoid the detailed technicality, I decided to focus on the following:

1) In planning for the anticipatory set:

    i. Students' religious demographic information should be considered thoroughly. The existence of students who participate in a minority religion or faith should be acknowledged. The teacher should show no favor to a specific religion group. Even in a rare case where the classroom consists of the same religious groups, a feminist teacher should bring up the religious diversity within Indonesia in an appreciative manner. Students should be encouraged to be confident to pray or not to pray based on what they believe in. Teachers and students should learn to appreciate students' choice to pray or not pray while making sure that the students' decision is not made under pressure.

    ii. The issue of dress code can be problematic, particularly in conservative schools like most schools in Indonesia. However, I argue that room for feminism is required in places where sexism is problematic. It is impossible to ask for the replacement of the uniform due to its national-level status. What feminist

teachers can do is not to shame the boys and girls who appear to break the dress code. Feminist teachers also should consider that students grow up physically. Especially in high school level where puberty is at its peak, feminist teachers should take into account how students from lower socioeconomic status (SES) cannot afford getting new uniforms as often as their peers of the higher SES. The personal discernment is encouraged and needed for the feminist teacher.

    iii.   In preparing motivations for students, a feminist teacher is committed to avoiding and challenging sexism in all forms including jokes or comments. Homophobic slurs and attitudes need to be challenged. This particular part can be challenging as religions are arguably prone to condone the heteronormative society. For this reason, ensuring human equity can be utilized instead.

2) Main activities:

    i.   In planning for and analyzing the lesson content, a feminist teacher should utilize the feminist lens. Awareness about the source of knowledge is necessary. For example, in chemistry, most of the theorists, formalists, and discoverers are White men, specifically from Western Europe. A feminist chemistry teacher, however, would understand the context and setting of this era where most women did not have access to education due to the patriarchy. By talking about this, the conversation can be directed to encourage girls to participate and pursue a career in science. Science is not exclusive to men, but it was a system that prohibited women from participating. This could lead to an unlearning moment and potential liberation of mindset to challenge the heteronormative of gender stereotypes.

ii.   When choosing the most suitable teaching methodology or strategy, a teacher can

go with three options: either adopt the existing one, create a new one, or a

combination of both previous choices. A feminist teacher acknowledges and

assesses her tool of choice regarding these options. However, feminist teachers

should consider their capacity and preference while at the same time weighing

the advantage and disadvantage of each option. Based on my experience that I

uncovered in Chapter 1, a developed country like the United States has its own

struggles too. Feminist teachers need to get rid of, or at least stay away from, our

inferiority-complex mentality in deciding the teaching methodology to use. We

need to stop thinking that "bule" are better and start to be looking around instead.

Feminism also encourages decolonizing education and challenging the

epistemology. For experienced teachers, I encourage them to believe in our

professional and personal experience. Sometimes, we need to believe in our guts

rather than being dictated by the theories birthed in such a faraway land. This is

not to say that we are not open to suggestions. Instead, feminist teachers should

be critical, guided by the feminist lens.

3) Assessment: In designing assessment, the feminist lens is relevant as well. In creating

question items for a test, we need to be aware of the language and the context of the

materials. Question item can be sexist, classist, or specifically, favor a specific group of

religion or ethnicity. These question items can present a phenomenon that is irrelevant

for students who do not have access or exposure to Western popular culture. For a class

project, community-based problem solving can be an alternative rather than abstract

problem solving. For example, students can engage in a service project that enables

students to see the issues their community faces. I argue that making a connection to the surrounding community can help reduce the learning gap among students. Further, it is one of the efforts that feminist teachers can do in order to curb the hierarchy of knowledge source and resource.

Beyond the Classroom

In most Indonesia public schools, including my home institution, the presidents for the student body are historically dominated by students who are boys. Feminist teachers cannot contain their feminist works in the classroom alone. The patriarchal leadership among students need to be challenged. On the other hand, feminist teachers should not hesitate to pursue the leadership positions themselves either. Some teachers admit that they love being teachers and intend to stick with the profession as a vocation or calling. However, being leaders do not always mean becoming a principal. We can be school or community-based event leaders. We can dedicate our classroom-based research project on issues of gender inequality and inequity in education to propose an approach to resolve these issues.

Conclusion

I was struggling due to my various identities during my tenure as an exchange student in a United States higher education institution. However, I consider that my colonial consciousness as indicated by my inferiority-complex mentality towards the Whiteness, to be the one that affected me the most. Only when I started to acknowledge that hinderance could I start the long process of decolonization. I have moved from inferiority-complex mentality to unapologetic feminism. It took me almost two years to get to this point. However, I argue that somehow deep down, I have always been a feminist. The heteropatriarchal system, at one point, succeeded in shoveling my feminism back down my throat. As my reflections indicate, I identify the traces of

inferiority-complex mentality that still linger within me. However, at least I am aware now when they dictate my perception. My reflections and this thesis helped me see the relevance of feminism for my profession as a teacher and my identity as a woman. As I am about to return to Indonesia, I now claim myself a feminist woman teacher who is committed to the collective struggles of my students and colleagues to becoming a culturally relevant feminist teacher. I also think that Feminist Theories and Methodologies class presented in the way I experienced should be assigned as a core course in all fields. Feminism can be relevant, but it always challenges the heteropatriarchal society. It embraces diversity but aims for collective efforts for liberation.

Limitations and Potential Research

This thesis is limited within the United States and Indonesia contexts only. As two of the most diverse countries in the world, feminism fits both nations that embrace the differences in principle. Feminism struggles when there is an attempt for forging homogeneity within the vastly multicultural nation. I acknowledge, however, that just because feminism fits, it does not mean that my argument for feminism in a K-12 school setting in Indonesia will be easy. It is going to take collective efforts by teachers on a long road. My proposed principles in the last chapter are limited to schools in my district in North Sumatra, Indonesia.

Feminist methodology with autoethnography as the method has helped me to grapple with issues that I experienced both as a student in my host institution and as a teacher in my home institution. I argue that feminist methodology could be utilized through various modes of methods and tools, providing room for centralizing the women teachers, who are the dominant gender of educators within K-12 education institutions. I argue that future research conducted by feminist teachers through feminist methodology can serve to provide more complete stories in making meaning and generate new relevant knowledge in our multicultural world.

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