

Positionality Statement

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I come to this work with a deeply rooted realization of what it looks like and feels like to be excluded from mainstream educational systems as well as traditional family structures. As a Native New Mexican, I grew up in a traditional Hispanic middle-class household that clearly defined our roles and responsibilities within a family structure. I also grew up in a neighborhood and community in which whites were predominately the majority. As I struggled to redefine and expand my identity to merge both worlds, I found that neither group was open to integration. I was part of a society in which I did not quite fit into either world. I was channeled into office machines and shorthand classes in high school and not allowed to take the science and math courses that I believed I needed. I found fault in the educational system that purposely excluded me from learning. I also found fault within my own family and community environment that encouraged me to accept the exclusionary practices as a fact. I rebelled.

My rebellious experience helped me realize that I had the power within me that could be harnessed to influence my ability to integrate into two very different worlds. One world offered educational opportunities that had been customarily closed to Hispanic females. With a Ph.D. in Multicultural Teacher and Childhood Education, I have benefited from the credentials I earned to serve in leadership positions. My work has included positions that have provided me a space for over 35 years in northern New Mexico that ensures or supports advocacy for students. I have been and I continue to be a community advocate, teacher, faculty and a college administrator. I have earned the trust of students, families, and peers. I have had the support of individuals in places of “power”; superintendents, college presidents, state leaders, and community leaders that have believed in my work. Because of the trust and support I have received, I have had the honor of seeing the results of building and protecting the bridges necessary to force systems to work on behalf of marginalized students. This work is fostered and nourished by interfacing with like-minded individuals that can and do contribute to a collective vision of respect by honoring their lived experiences.

The other world allowed me to partially retain and not forfeit my traditional core values. This meant that I did not share in the white mainstream social structures. I have experienced the heartbreak, anger, and opposition from every corner imaginable. The limitations imposed by those opposing change is often as strong as the power structures still primarily in place. This phenomenon also applies to trying to remain a vital member within my own extended traditional family structure.

The duality of my identity has provided me the knowledge, background, and lived experience of a past that is still very much alive today. It has allowed me to experience how educational systems have historically been used to disenfranchise and destroy some communities (Black and Hispanic), and to acculturate and destroy others (Native American). The educational system’s role may have been different in either case, but the goal was the same. I am not convinced much has changed. But, my identity has also provided me the strength and energy to advocate for

others from marginalized populations. It has inspired me to learn from research, researchers, and lived experiences that span a multitude of identities.

I am aware that my role in this work gives me influence in some ways and limits me in others. I try to be attentive to the fact that my very presence can still offend the status quo of power. I am also attentive to the fact as a member of our northern New Mexico community, I have built the respectful relationships required to influence positive change. I have and will continue to approach this work as a learner, as a researcher, and as a practitioner.