Complexity and Diversity of Exile Pedagogy

Exile pedagogy, a form of public pedagogy (e.g., Ayers, 2004; Grande, 2004; Lather, 1998), is highly contested with complicated tensions and irresolvable contradictions within diverse theoretical traditions and socio-political, cultural, and linguistic contexts. Exile pedagogy is interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary. Exile pedagogy is international, transnational, and sometimes counternational. Exile pedagogy, with its interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and counterdisciplinarity, thrives with diverse paradigms, perspectives, and possibilities (Schubert, 1986), and demands multiple understandings toward commonplaces (teachers, learners, subject matters, and milieu) (Schwab, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1983) acting together in practical and real world environments (Connelly, He, & Phillion, 2008). The breadth, diversity, and complexity of exile pedagogy and its practical relevance are central to a wide array of educational thoughts reflected in contested theories, practices, and contexts.

In addition to its breadth, diversity, and complexity, another significant aspect of exile pedagogy is the broad conception of what exile entails in terms of public pedagogy. Many educational theorists and cultural workers around the world challenge traditional ways of defining and practicing pedagogy, transgress nationalistic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, and choose diverse forms of pedagogy, such as critical public pedagogy, revolutionary critical pedagogy, and Red pedagogy, as radical democratic practice. This radical democratic orientation of pedagogy and its in-betweenness are central to exile pedagogy which I begin to explore in this chapter.

The breadth, diversity, and complexity of exile pedagogy vitalize heated debates and complicated conversations among educational theorists and cultural workers around the world. Educational workers engaged in exile pedagogy not only question whose knowledge should be considered worthwhile (Schubert, 2009) and how experience should be interpreted, theorized, and represented, but also confront issues of equity, equality, social justice, societal change, and democratic human conditions through pedagogical theory and praxis.

Theoretical Traditions

Exile pedagogy draws on a wide array of theoretical traditions. Henry Giroux (2004), a leading critical scholar, theorizes “the regulatory and emancipatory relationship among culture, power,
and politics as expressed through the dynamics of what [he calls] public pedagogy” (p. 62) “in which learning becomes indispensable to the very process of social change, and social change becomes the precondition for a politics that moves in the direction of a less hierarchical, more radical democratic social order” (Giroux, 2000, p. 356). Cultural workers engaged in such a critical public pedagogy make “a firm commitment to intellectual rigor and a deep regard for matters of compassion and social responsibility aimed at deepening and extending the possibilities for critical agency, radical justice, economic democracy, and the just distribution of political power” (2004, p. 64).

Peter McLaren (2002), another leading critical scholar, theorizes the collective, critical, systematic, participatory, and creative (p. xvii) aspects of what he calls “revolutionary critical pedagogy.” Sandy Grande (2004), a Native American social and political thinker and scholar, employs the visions of this radical democratic orientation of pedagogy as “starting points for rethinking indigenous praxis” (p. 28). For Sandy Grande (2004),

[What] distinguishes Red pedagogy is its basis in hope. Not the future-centered hope of the Western imagination, but rather, a hope that lives in contingency with the past—one that trusts the beliefs and understandings of our ancestors as well as the power of traditional knowledge…. The hope is for a Red pedagogy that not only helps sustain the life ways of indigenous peoples but also provides an explanatory framework that helps us understand the complex and intersecting vectors of power shaping the historical-material conditions of indigenous schools and communities. (pp. 28–29)

Building on the work of James Baldwin and Malcolm X, Edward Saïd (1994), one of the most distinguished cultural critics, sees “intellectual as exile and marginal, as amateur, and as the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power” (p. xvi). For Saïd, “Real intellectuals…denounce corruption, defend the weak, defy imperfect or oppressive authority” (p. 6). They “are supposed to risk being burned at the stake, ostracized, or crucified” (p. 7). Based on his personal experience, Saïd transcends the meaning of exile which extends the canvas of public pedagogy to the complex, contradictory, and contested lives intellectuals live:

Exile for the intellectuals…is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You can not go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation. (p. 53)

Public intellectuals celebrate and thrive with this unsettling and troubling aspect of their lives. William Ayers (2006) re-affirms that the roles of public intellectuals are to:

draw sustenance and perspective from the humanities in order to better see the world as it is. Whatever [they] find that is out-of-balance must be challenged, the devastating taken-for-granted dissected, exposed, illuminated…[The] core of all [their] work must be human knowledge and human freedom, both enlightenment and emancipation. (p. 87)

They “join one another to imagine and build a participatory movement for justice, a public space for the enactment of democratic dreams…” (Ayers, 2006, p. 96).

The radical democratic orientations of Giroux’ critical public pedagogy, McLaren’s revolutionary pedagogy, Grande’s Red pedagogy, Saïd’s intellectuals as exiles, and Ayers’ teaching toward freedom are the starting points for rethinking a form of public pedagogy, which I call
Exile pedagogy in this chapter. With equity, equality, social justice, and human freedom as explicit goals of exile pedagogy, the following guiding questions suggested by Ayers (2006) are illuminated in the deliberation of exile pedagogy:

1. What are the issues that marginalized or disadvantaged people speak of with excitement, anger, fear, or hope?
2. How can I enter a dialogue in which I will learn from a specific community itself about problems and obstacles they face?
3. What endogenous experiences do people already have that can point the way toward solutions?
4. What is missing from the “official story” that will make the problems of the oppressed more understandable?
5. What current proposed policies serve the privileged and the powerful, and how are they made to appear inevitable?
6. How can the public space for discussion, problem posing, and problem solving be expanded? (p. 88)

The politics and poetics of exile pedagogy, borrowing part of Paul Tiyambe Zeleza's (2005) interpretation on Edward Saïd in Africa, lie in educational workers’ strong advocacy on behalf of individuals, groups, families, tribes, communities, and societies that are often at controversy, underrepresented, misrepresented, or excluded in the official narrative. Educational workers who are engaged in exile pedagogy connect the personal with the political, the practical with the theoretical, and the local with the global through passionate participation in and critical reflection upon teaching, learning, inquiry, and life with an “epistemological curiosity—a curiosity that is often missing in dialogue as conversation” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 382). As Freire strongly argued:

We must not negate practice for the sake of theory. To do so would reduce theory to a pure verbalism or intellectualism. By the same token, to negate theory for the sake of practice, as in the use of dialogue as conversation, is to run the risk of losing oneself in the disconnectedness of practice. It is for this reason that I never advocate either a theoretic elitism or a practice ungrounded in theory, but the unity between theory and practice. In order to achieve this unity, one must have an epistemological curiosity… (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 382)

Exile pedagogy workers cultivate this epistemological curiosity in teaching, learning, inquiry, and life with conscious reflection on their diverse exile experience—which I address in the next section—to challenge assumptions and recognize contradictions between theory and practice, and to critically examine the impact of theory on practice and of practice on theory. Their pedagogical practice builds on long-term, heart-felt engagement and shared efforts driven by commitment to equity, equality, social justice, freedom, and human possibility. They join one another and others to move beyond boundaries, to transgress orthodoxies, and to build a participatory intellectual movement to promote a more balanced, fair, and equitable human condition through acts of teaching in an increasingly diversified and contested world landscape.

Rethinking Exile

The conception of exile is usually connected with the conceptions of diaspora and nomadism. For Hamis Naficy (1999), a film and media studies scholar,
“Exile” suggests a painful or punitive banishment from one’s homeland. Though it can either be voluntary or involuntary, internal [i.e., forced resettlement within the country of residence], or external [i.e., deportation outside the country of residence], exile generally implies a fact of trauma, an imminent danger, usually political, that makes the home no longer safely habitable. (p. 19)

Diaspora (in Greek, διασπορά—“a scattering [of seeds]”), like exile, is a concept which refers to the movement of any population sharing common ethnic identity who were either forced to leave or voluntarily left their settled territory and became residents in areas often far removed from the former. The term “diaspora” historically referred to “the successive scattering and reconstitution-in-dispersion of the Jews after Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman conquests” (Naficy, 1999, p. 20). In a broader sense, it could refer to the situations when indigenous people, immigrants, and emigrants were forced, in certain degree, to leave their tribes, native lands, territories, communities, confederations, or countries. “Exile may be solitary, but diaspora is always collective” (Naficy, 1999, p. 20). Unlike exile or diaspora, nomadism refers to a way of life of people who do not live continually in the same place but move cyclically or periodically in groups, centers, or communities.

Most of the literature on exile focuses on a binary approach or “interpretations of opposites” in “the ways [exile includes] conflicts and oppositions” (McClennen, 2004, p. 30), where exile is seen either as mourning for loss of home or nostalgia of home, or being liberated from the experience of displacement. This oppositional or binary approach to exile can be found in a wide array of literature such as reflections on exile (e.g., Saïd, 2000); philosophers in exile (e.g., Grathoff, 1989); women in exile (e.g., Afkhami, 1994); writers in exile (e.g., Robinson, 1994); art of memory in exile (e.g., Pichová, 2002); exilic and diasporic filmmaking (e.g., Naficy, 2001); film, media, and the politics of place (e.g., Naficy, 1999); the making of exile cultures (e.g., Naficy, 1993); exiles and communities (e.g., Pagano, 1990); postmodern discourses of displacement (e.g., Kaplan, 1996); exiles, diasporas, and strangers in art (e.g., Mercer, 2008); reluctant exiles (e.g., Skeldon, 1994); feminism, diasporas, and neoliberalisms (e.g., Grewal, 2005); and contested landscapes, movement, exile, and place (Bender & Winer, 2001). There is more a sense of blurrness, overlap, or multiplicity and a sense of being in the midst in approaches to exile in arts, films, media, fictions, and poems. This discursive, multifaceted, complicated, sometimes contradictory or contested nature of exile more authentically represents the in-betweenness in exile, which I will canvass in the next section as the prelude to conceptualizing exile pedagogy.

Autobiographical Roots

The conception of exile pedagogy builds upon my earlier work on in-betweeness in exile (He, 2006). As I think about writing this chapter, exile pedagogy and its implications are deeply embedded in my experience as a Chinese woman and a faculty member moving back and forth between constantly changing Eastern and Western theoretical traditions, languages, and cultures. My experience is not easily, or even best captured, by the notion of public pedagogy. A more appropriate way of articulating how I feel about my experience within the academy is one of in-betweenness in exile which is central to exile pedagogy. My experience is not one of being in-between public and private but, rather, something more complex, historically contested, culturally, and linguistically contextualized. My position and experience in the academy are part of this complexity, but by no means all, or even the most important. The issue, I think, essentially comes to a question of cross-cultural movement between landscapes that are themselves in a flux of chaos, contradictions, renewals, diversities, and complexities. In the following
I articulate this sense of in-betweenness in exile—a prelude to conceptualizing exile pedagogy. I discuss the dilemmas, tensions, and advantages associated with my life in China, life in the North American academy, and life in-between.

In-Betweenness in Exile: Cultural Movements in China

I am a woman of color, born and raised in a dramatically different culture and language, teaching and working in a university in the United States. My sense of in-betweenness in exile carries more a compelling sense of being in the midst rather than being either an excluded outcast or an assimilated triumphant. But what are the origins of this feeling? Why do I feel in-between in exile?

The reasons, I think, were inscribed in my being as a child. Though I did not know it, I was in-between in exile at birth when people in my generation were facing two big movements in Chinese history: the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957–1958) and the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960). These two movements had a strong impact on my preschool years. I remember that the children in my generation swallowed those political slogans as we learned to speak. At the beginning of the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957, Mao Zedong [then the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)] proclaimed: “Let one hundred schools of thought contend; let one hundred flowers bloom.” The “one hundred schools” of philosophy included the Confucianist, Daoist, and legalist schools which clashed with one another in their attempts to reform the CCP and China. We heard that our “aunts and uncles” (intellectuals of our parents’ generation) were encouraged to do self-criticism, to confess their anti-proletarian sentiments, and to express their critical views about the CCP to ameliorate socialist China. Soon in front of us, a disturbing picture appeared: The intensity of dissent about the CCP threatened Mao’s regime. The hundred flowers campaign ended abruptly in a suppression of intellectuals. One hundred thousand “counter-revolutionaries” were “unmasked and dealt with,” more than one million of our “aunts and uncles” were “subjected to police investigation,” and several millions were sent to the countryside for “re-education.”

My memory was flooded with people’s pain, silence, and agony. In 1958 Mao urged the simultaneous development of agriculture and industry with a focus on heavy industry. This campaign initiated a gigantic social mobilization, which was intended to have a labor investment in industry. A new form of social organization, the people’s commune, was established to enable the rural productive apparatus to function without excessive dependence on the central government. I heard people shouting slogans: “Let’s leap from socialism to communism!” “Let’s surpass the United States and follow Great Britain in ten years!” Deep in my memory, I can still vaguely remember hundreds upon hundreds of people working and eating together, with loudspeakers blaring all day long. People were searching for pots, pans, and any other kind of metal to melt into iron and steel. Soon fewer and fewer people went to work together. My brothers, my sister, I, and many other children only went to school for half a day since the little food we had could not last for a whole school day. We were led into a massive starvation. I began to receive primary school education amidst such turbulence.

From Grade 1 to Grade 3, children of my generation learned how to read, write, and count. Our teachers were quite strict with the syllabi, which focused on love for the Chinese Communist Party, Chairman Mao, and Socialist China. Our primary courses included language, math, politics, physical education, and music. In our language courses, our reading materials were mainly about Chinese fables, and revolutionary heroes and heroines such as: how Chairman Mao became the revolutionary hero and leader; how Chairman Mao’s colleagues became national heroes or heroines; stories of the capitalists’ and landlords’ cruelty, etc. Even some
of the math questions were built upon those political topics. In politics, we were requested to memorize important events in Chinese history, especially those of the Communist Party. We were frequently asked to report our thoughts to our instructors. In physical education, we went through very rigid training. We were asked to walk like the wind, to sit like a clock, and to sleep like a bow. In music lessons, we learned to sing and dance to revolutionary songs such as “Love our Socialist China!” “Love Our Communist Party!” “Long Live Chairman Mao!” and “Long Live the Chinese Communist Party!”

We would do whatever Chairman Mao told us to do. We felt happy and never complained about any difficulties in our lives. We were asked to think about all the hardships the Red Army had gone through when they were doing the Twenty Five Thousand Li (12,500 kilometers) March, a retreat which laid the foundation for the Chinese Communist Party’s success in 1949. We dressed in uniform blue. Six days a week, we went to school, listened to the teachers, and thought along the same lines as the teachers. The teachers listened to the authorities and thought along the same lines as the authorities.

My parents were teachers, and as such, were relatively privileged, being considered “engineers of human beings’ brains.” But the forces in the Anti-Rightist Movement and in the Great Leap Forward led to dramatic changes in my family’s status within Chinese society. These changes culminated during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) when social values were turned upside down. We heard people shout, “Long Live the Unprecedented Proletarian Cultural Revolution!” “Long Live Our Chairman Mao Zedong!” We learned to shout along with the people to show our revolutionary spirit. To go with the wind was to protect ourselves since “the first bird flying out of the bush will get shot first” (a popular Chinese saying that we learned almost as soon as we were born). As 11- or 12-year-old children, we were encountering torture, violence, and madness almost every day. We could see: wives reporting their husbands…sons fighting ruthlessly against their fathers or mothers…brothers spying on each other…“revolutionary” students sending their teachers to “reforming farms,” or dark rooms, and repaying their teachers’ kindness with enmity and cruelty.

At school, students shredded their textbooks, read Chairman Mao’s famous sayings, drafted Da Zi Bao (criticism), put them on the wall to criticize teachers’ inflammatory teaching and to show their revolutionary action, and criticized themselves for any bourgeois thinking including dressing well and colorfully, and wanting to eat good food and live a good life. On some school days, peasants and workers were invited to schools to tell the students about their hard lives before the Liberation (1949). We sang and danced to revolutionary songs all through our secondary and middle school years during the Grand Cultural Revolution. Everyday before our meals, we had to stand up to worship Chairman Mao and then we ate. Since we were not allowed to join the Red Guards, which could provide some advantage for our education, joining the Chinese Communist Youth League became almost impossible. Thus our education beyond high school was in jeopardy although we were doing very well at school.

Intellectuals were considered bourgeois and were to be “re-educated.” My father, for example, was removed from his position as teacher, chastised in a street parade where he wore a high paper hat and placard on his chest with his name upside down and crossed with a red X, and eventually imprisoned on a reforming farm to “confess his anti-revolutionary bourgeois pollution of students’ brains.” Thus, for me, the in-betweenness in exile I was born into in the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Great Leap Forward became visible in the upside down values of the Cultural Revolution. As a child, my values and beliefs were in question. Once my parents were highly revered, and suddenly I witnessed my father being publicly chastised, which sharply put basic values and beliefs in conflict. As a child I held onto those values meanwhile adopting the values of the Cultural Revolution without questioning. As a child, of course, I neither thought of...
this as in-betweenness in exile nor understood that there were fundamental intellectual threads at work, which, I now see, are tied to my current academic life. I have written about this as a key moment in my cross-cultural life and identity development (He, 2003), which, I now realize, is also a key moment in conceptualizing exile pedagogy.

These cultural movements and the sense of in-betweenness in exile were particularly poignant for me because this intellectual in-betweenness within political upheavals was essentially an intellectual exile. What began as anguish over family and social values is now with me as an intellectual sense of not belonging here or there, but of being in-between in exile.

What began in the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Great Leap Forward had at least one other major revolutionary expression important to the development of my sense of in-betweenness in exile. It was the intellectuals who were primarily targeted in the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Cultural Revolution, and in another form, later in what the world has come to know as the Tiananmen Square Student Movement (1989).

I was somewhat characteristic of my generation in that following the Cultural Revolution, when the universities re-opened, it was, for the most part, the children of the intellectual group who went to university. Their sense of being in-betweenness in exile was brought to life during the Cultural Revolution when books with inflammatory ideas were burned, libraries were closed down, lessons and textbooks were filled with revolutionary slogans but not content knowledge, schools were open with only political events, and youngsters were sent to reforming farms, factories, and military bases to receive re-education from peasants, workers, and soldiers. I remember, during hot summer nights, the children in my neighborhoods would gather with constant struggling against outrageous mosquito bites to listen to stories of Chinese literature from an oral history storyteller in the community. Sometimes some of our “uncles and aunts” would risk their lives to tutor some of us in mathematics, physics, chemistry, sciences, language, and literature. Some of us even stole books from the banned libraries and secretly swallowed forbidden sexually implicit or explicit adult books and listened to foreign radio broadcasts. I also remember from time to time while others played cards, went to films, or got involved in street fights, I and some other youngsters would study under oil lamps or in shabby huts after we had spent the whole day doing heavy labor or military training in reforming farms, factories, and military bases. We would memorize English words, expressions, and writings during our break time on our reforming farms or in the factories while overhearing peasants and workers flirting with one another. This is how my education and the education of my generation continued, secretly in-between in exile.

I was successful at university and became a teacher of English as a foreign language. Even then, during that comparatively stable time, the sense of in-betweenness in exile born during the earlier cultural movements was strengthened. My students, most of whom were born during the Cultural Revolution and, therefore, had no direct experience of it, were out of sync with their teachers such as myself. The China they knew and the China I knew were different. This is a difference that continues to this day as people of different generations speak very differently of the China they know. This difference intensified my sense of in-betweenness in exile within my own culture.

My years as a teacher created, I now realize, yet another thread in my sense of in-betweenness in exile, this time the foreigner versus the Chinese, and the position I now find myself in as being neither the foreigner, that is, the American, nor the Chinese. How did this occur? The post Cultural Revolution was a time of opening up to the West. Like many other youngsters, we valued every minute of our university time. We knew that we had to accept a very heavy course load and a rigid discipline if we were to make up for the 10 years’ formal schooling we had lost during the Grand Cultural Revolution. We were trained to work diligently like a silkworm (making a
silk cocoon with a lot of patience) and selflessly like a candle (lighting others and sacrificing ourselves).

Meanwhile, some communication media such as TV programs, concerts, and dancing parties blew some Western wind into our thinking. It was during those university years that we began to receive some Western influence. Some Western scholars or teachers began to come to Chinese university campuses to teach or talk with Chinese students. We met them in our classrooms, at English corners (English speaking activity centers), in the streets, and in the libraries. We felt curious about their looks and their ways of talking and teaching. I studied with four American teachers, two Canadian teachers, and one British teacher on my Chinese campus and learned ways of teaching and learning dramatically differently from those I had learned from my parents and other Chinese teachers. I tried to bring these ideas to my own teaching and, as always, struggled to find the balance. I was, intellectually, in-between in exile.

This thread of being in-between the Chinese and the foreigner became intensified during the Tiananmen Square Student Movement in 1989. Even though China’s open door policy (1978–present) was intended as an opening to the Western economic world, Western values and ideas, as I noted above, flooded into China, particularly Western ideas of democracy. Tiananmen Square, the largest square in the center of Beijing, has been a national symbol of central governance for centuries (China National Tourist Administration, 2003). Tiananmen Gate, “Gate of Heavenly Peace,” is the gate to the imperial city—the Forbidden City. It has functioned “as a rostrum for proclamations to the assembled masses,” with the Great Hall of the People on the western side, the Museum of the Chinese Revolution and the Museum of Chinese History to its east and west, the Monument to the People’s Heroes at the center of the square, and the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall and the Qianmen Gate in the south (China National Tourist Administration, 2003). Democracy-oriented students used this symbolic location to make a stand on democracy and request that the government move toward a democratic modern China. The student movement ended with military crackdown, political persecution, arrest of student leaders, and the exodus of large numbers of students and intellectuals on exile.

As a university teacher, I was once again in-between in exile, pushed and pulled in several directions at the same time. My sympathies with my own students’ desire for Western democratic ideas paralleled my sympathies with Chinese situations and its history. I was caught between advising my students to be cautious, to respect traditional values and the current government, and to reach out to the West and exercise democratic rights. The Tiananmen Square Student Movement catapulted my thinking on my China-foreign in-betweenness in exile, and I left China to study in Canada.

In-Betweenness: The North American Academy

My journey to North America dramatically shifted my positioning on what was foreign. Suddenly I became the foreigner, but still, perhaps even more intensely so, in-between in exile. I brought my Chineseness which was far more of a living presence in my new environment than was Western foreignness a presence in my Chinese environment. I was living in a culture, actually cultures, that I had mostly read about and had only experienced indirectly in China. I earlier noted that the cultural in-betweenness into which I was born was, ultimately, an intellectual exile. This became strengthened on my arrival in North America. First and foremost, as in the Cultural Revolution, the experience was one commonly referred to as “cultural shock.” Values that held me together and guided me were, as in the Cultural Revolution, turned topsy turvy as I landed on North American soil. But I soon found, or at least it now seems as I reflect on my
experience, that landing on North American soil meant an intellectual shift. What might have been seen as cultural in-betweenness became, and was, intellectual exile.

One of the special features of in-betweenness in exile as I experienced it in North America, and which made even more distinct my sense of in-betweenness in exile, was constant uncertainty, unavoidable diversity, irresolvable confusion, and intensified complexity. I moved to undertake my doctoral studies in Toronto, a city recognized by the United Nations as the most multicultural in the world. Diversity and multiculturalism were key words everywhere: on the radio, in the newspapers, on the streets, and of course, in the ideologies and reference lists of the courses I was taking. Whereas I may have thought of myself as coming to North America and into something that could be more or less thought of monoculturally, I found myself wondering in the midst of uncertainty, confusion, diversity, and complexity, even more so than before, where I fit within this diverse, contradictory, and contested multicultural, landscape. The intellectual work complicated, rather than simplified, this sense of in-betweenness in exile. In search of theoretical traditions, I found a diversity of positions. If there was a key note that rang through my course work, it was an intellectual world of multiplicity that one needed to sort through and choose ideas, theories, and ways of thinking suitable to oneself and to various topics of concern.

Some aspects of this intellectual in-betweenness in exile were surprising from another point of view by providing unexpected connections to the intellectual roots of my upbringing. I found myself studying John Dewey and reading about John Dewey’s trips to China (Clopton & Ou, 1973). I recognized, as did Hall and Ames (1999), intellectual links between Confucian thought and Deweyan thought. Indeed, my sense that Dewey shortened, rather than lengthened, the in-between bridge in exile terrain may have, at least partially, been behind my special interest in Deweyan theory as I pursued my doctoral studies.

Though I had encountered, and even tried, Western thinking and teaching methods, and had worked through master’s degree programs in two different universities, I found the spirit of inquiry required in intellectual life to be quite different from the sense of authority, certainty, and conformity that tended to accompany my ways of Chinese teaching and learning. Again, I found myself very much in-between in exile because I sensed a different way of thinking and reached out to it meanwhile being held from it by the in-betweenness in exile I was born into and the in-betweenness in exile I lived. I was in-between in exile with a becoming intellectually inquiry-oriented and activist self and a sustained and conformed self who thought of knowledge in formalistic ways. Bowing to the authority and conforming to orthodoxy were part of my upbringing and formal schooling in China. During many cultural and political movements in China, inflammatory ideas were perceived anti-revolutionary, dangerously threatening, frantically forbidden, and brutally punished. Finally when I was able to internalize inflammatory ideas such as critical theory, critical race theory, ecofeminism, and further develop or practice them in my learning, teaching, inquiry, writing, and ways of living, I was asked to “take away inflammatory languages” from my doctoral students’ dissertation proposal writing for the purpose of obtaining the approval of my university’s Institutional Review Board. When I was able to overcome the fear of challenging the orthodoxies and confronting the authorities, I was accused of being disrespectful. Just as I now understand that I can never escape the in-betweenness in exile to which I was born, I cannot escape the in-betweenness in exile of pedagogy as critical or liberatory inquiry and pedagogy as a quest for certainty or conformity. This in-betweenness in exile permeates my intellectual life in North America.

This in-betweenness in exile, in another form, continues to develop as I live in the North American academy as a faculty member. Being a woman of color, as who I was, and will always be, I often find myself caught up in-between tensions and dilemmas. This in-betweenness is
compound with multiple in-betweeness in exile: in-betweenness in exile within my own culture in China, in North America, and in-between. This complex in-betweenness in exile blurs the boundaries between “colonizer and colonized, dominant and subordinate, oppressor and oppressed” (Ang, 2001, p. 2). It creates ambiguities, complexities, and contradictions. I find myself constantly entangled in-between in exile. As I encouraged my students in the United States to challenge their White privileges, I realized that as a Han, the dominant cultural group among 56 ethnic groups in China, I was privileged even though I was intellectually suppressed during cultural movements in China. I also realized that I was privileged as one of the very few Chinese women who could afford to step out of my own country to experience this complex in-betweenness in exile even though I kept losing my sense of belonging in North America. I became, in the Mainland Chinese vernacular, an Overseas Chinese woman with “longer knowledge and shorter hair” (more educated and independent, and less “feminine”), and a woman with a “sandwich mind” (partially Chinese and partially Western).

This in-betweenness in exile became more complicated as I moved back and forth in-between cultures in China and North America. In May 2001, I was invited back to China as a Chinese American professor to attend an educational convention on women and minority education and give public lectures. As I flew across the North American continent back to the Asian continent, the cross-cultural, intellectual, in-betweenness led to political in-betweenness in exile. On April 19, 2001, the U.S. Department of State issued a public announcement “cautioning Americans—especially Americans of Chinese origin—that they should carefully evaluate their risk of being detained by Chinese authorities before deciding whether to travel to China….” (U.S. Department of State, 2001). The announcement states “that individuals who have at any time engaged in activities or published writings critical of Chinese government policies…are particularly at risk of detention, even if they have previously visited China without incident” (U.S. Department of State, 2001). As a Chinese-born American, I was advised not to travel back to China. That incident led to tensions and dilemmas. My writing on my experience of the Cultural Revolution (He, 1998) might be perceived to carry implicit criticism against the Chinese government. I was, again, captured in-between in exile. This time, the in-betweenness in exile was political. I was proud of my writing but frightened by its political potential. This fearful feeling was intensified when the Chinese graduate students at the conference congenially warned me to be careful about what I said and what I did in public since there was a group of security officers housed just above my residence room. My sense of in-betweenness in exile became traumatized.

This political aspect of intellectual in-betweenness in exile became magnified as I translated my talk and my North American colleagues’ talks in Chinese. I found myself stumbling through translation at the very beginning of the conference, being recognized by my Chinese colleagues as an American professor who “dressed like a Chinese and talked like a foreigner” while they themselves dressed in Western ties and suits and talked about the Western paradigms of research in eloquent Chinese English. To borrow a phrase from Hoffman (1989), I felt “lost in translation” since the academic language of multiculturalism and qualitative research was not mentioned in my Chinese education. The political in-betweeness in exile with which I approached the conference turned into linguistic in-betweeness in exile during the conference. I found myself gaining confidence in my translation throughout the conference and, as such, while still in-between in exile, I felt myself moving towards my Chinese self. Being “lost in translation” was, for me, as it was for Hoffman, a metaphor for in-betweenness in exile and the sense of not belonging here or there that comes with cultural movements and political upheavals. The nuanced cultural, political, and linguistic sense of in-betweenness in exile that accompanied my attendance at the conference characterized my identity as a woman of color in the North American academy. I am, and always will be, I believe, in-between in exile. A recognition
of this in-betweenness in exile is, perhaps, the turning point of my inquiry in the North American academy. It is a prelude to conceptualizing exile pedagogy.

Prelude to Conceptualizing Exile Pedagogy

In the midst of divergence and convergence of theoretical traditions of public pedagogy, there are emergent pedagogies that move beyond boundaries, transgress orthodoxies, and build an activist movement to promote a more balanced and equitable global human condition that encourages participation of all citizens, guarantees respect, innovation, interaction, cohesion, justice, and peace, and promotes cultural, linguistic, intellectual, and ecological diversity and complexity.

In response to contradictions, diversities, and complexities of human experience, as Robert Coles called for in 1989, some pedagogy inquirers incorporate narrative, story, autobiography, memoir, fiction, oral history, documentary film, painting, and poetry into teaching, learning, inquiry, and life. Narrative inquiry, pioneered by Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), flourishes in narrative and experience in teaching and learning (Philion, He, & Connelly, 2005). Narrative work can also be found in life based literary narratives (Phillion & He, 2004) drawn upon the notion of narrative or literary imagination in the works of Maxine Greene (1995) and Martha Nussbaum (1997). Narrative is also becoming prevalent as researchers such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Laurence Parker, Donna Deyhle, Sofia Villenas, Sandy Grande, and David Stovall draw on critical race theory (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2003) to tell hidden and silenced narratives of suppressed and underrepresented groups to counter the preconceived meta-narrative represented in scientific-based public pedagogy that often portrays these groups as deficient and inferior.

In addition to a turn to narrative in the field, there are emergent contested forms of pedagogy that move beyond boundaries, transgress orthodoxies, and promote cultural, linguistic, intellectual, and ecological diversity, justice, and complexity. For instance, James Sears (1992) and William Pinar (1994) developed queer theory in curriculum studies, which built upon gender studies that emerged in the fields of gay and lesbian studies and feminist studies and was heavily influenced by Michel Foucault (1986a, 1986b) and Judith Butler (1990). Through a reflexive and reflective inquiry into one’s personal experience, queer inquirers deconstruct categorizations and fixed notions of gender, sexuality, and identities. This fluid aspect of identity and sexuality connects with the work of G. Mark Johnson and George Lakoff (1999) on body and mind connection, Martha Nussbaum (1997) on literary imagination and love’s knowledge, and Ruth Behar (1996) on vulnerable observer. This complex and fluid quality of experience influences generations of researchers in cultural studies such as Marla Morris (2008) in psychoanalysis and ill narrative, Patti Lather (1991) in postmodern feminist research, Pauline Sameshima (2007) in pedagogy of parallax, John Weaver (2004) in postmodern science and narrative, Greg Dimitriadis (2001) in performing identity/performing culture, and Hongyu Wang (2004) in the third space, to honor the fluidity and complexity of bodily knowledge in public pedagogy.

Drawing upon the work of W. E. B. Du Bois (e.g., 1994), Edward Saïd (e.g., 1994), Paulo Freire (e.g., 1970), and William Ayers (e.g., 2004), many other critical, liberatory, and democratic thinkers engage in activist and social justice oriented pedagogy. There is a burst of oral history research in pedagogy studies drawn upon Frontier women’s oral history research (e.g., Gluck & Patai, 1991) in 1975 led by academic feminists and feminist activists such as Sherna Gluck, Margaret Strobel, Sherry Thomas, Susan Armitage, Judy Yung, Daphne Patai, and many others documenting womens’ lives and experiences, collected from health clinics, rape crisis lines, battered women shelters, displaced homemakers programs, women’s legal services, welfare rights
organizations, and women's labor organizations. The oral history research also draws from oral narrative research engaged by Africana (African and African American) women scholars (e.g., Vaz, 1997) such as Georgia W. Brown, Kim Marie Vaz, Renée T. White, and many others. More pedagogy inquirers, particularly a group of practitioner inquirers in the South engage in personal–passionate–participatory inquiry (He & Phillion, 2008) that employs critical race oral history, critical race geographical narrative, documentary research, or oral narrative research method to explore the narratives and experiences of repressions, suppressions, subjugations, and stereotypes of Southern women, Blacks, and other disenfranchised individuals and groups, and the force of slavery, racism, sexism, classism, religious repression, and other forms of oppression and suppressions on the curriculum in the South.

There are emergent critical and indigenous methodologies (e.g., Denzin, Lincoln, & Tuhiwai Smith, 2008; Grande, 2004; Lomawaima, 1994; Ng-A-Fook, 2007) that connect critical theory with indigenous knowledge and socio-political contexts of indigenous education to develop transcendent theories of decolonization and advocate the liberty of indigenous language and cultural rights and intellectualism. There is also an emergent form of post/neocolonial feminist/ecofeminist inquiry (e.g., Minh-ha, 1989; Mies & Shiva, 1993), led by Trinh T. Minh-ha, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Uma Narayan, Kwok Pui-lan, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Chela Sandal, that explores the intersectionality of repatriarchal historical analysis, spirituality, migration, displacement, slavery, racism, sexism, classism, imperialism, colonialism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, anthropocentrism (i.e., human supremacism), speciesism, and other forms of oppression.

At this moment in time, there is a renewal in public pedagogy. This moment in time is one of vitality, excitement, and revitalization. It is a time of diversification and complexity. This renewal is reflective of a dramatic resurgence of the landscape of public pedagogy—ongoing, heated debate in theory and practice, increasing recognition of the chaos and vigor of pedagogy contexts, and struggles over uncertain, confusing, and highly contested pedagogic issues in practice. This renewal is inextricably bound up with the processes and impact of diversification of the world landscape which, in turn, further complicates the diversification of cultures, languages, cultures, identities, communications, economies, ecological systems, and ways of lives in the East, in the West, and in-between. This diversity and complexity has emerged as one of the urgent challenges facing twenty-first century educational workers—students, parents, teachers, educators, policy makers and administrators, educators, and parents. This diversity and complexity, which create vitality, excitement, revitalization, and renewal in the field, also pose challenges for new, multiple, and eclectic forms of public pedagogy such as exile pedagogy—a dynamic, fluid, and contested convergence and divergence of pedagogy in-between languages, cultures, identities, and powers in an exiled and contested world landscape.

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