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My Autobiographical-Poetic Rendition: An Inquiry into Humanizing our Teacher Scholarship

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In this paper, I highlight four distinct but interconnected areas of my life history that I refer to as *autobiographic poetic waves*. These waves are layered with the complex underpinning of racial, linguistic, gendered, classed, and professional identity politics that continue to not only liberate but also subjugate me at times. These autobiographic poetic waves highlight my experiences as a hyphenated Korean-American woman living in the midst of discourses that continue to privilege dominant ideologies that contradict my lived experiences, yet permeate through every fiber of my being as a member of the academic community. Hence, I focus on two questions: In what ways, do I perceive and understand my lived experiences as a Korean-American, second language writer, English teacher, teacher-scholar, and Mama PhD? And, how can my understanding of these lived experiences further influence the work I do as a teacher-educator? Learning from and moved by the work of Hanauer (2012a, 2012b, 2013), my autobiographical-poetic rendition is an epistemological and ontological revolution that involves understanding my life history as four distinct but interconnected waves: (1) Immigration and Emergence of Hyphenated Identities; (2) Legitimization of the Hyphenated Identities in Higher Education; (3) Epistemological and Ontological Revolution; (4) Perception of Mama PhDs. These waves are interspersed with an extended version of the poem, *Untitled*, I wrote in 1984. I focus on the loss, divide, privileges, disenfranchisement, and identity that have permeated my life history since my family's immigration. I conclude with implications for the field of TESOL teacher education.

Untitled¹
There is a garden
Full of beautiful
Chrysanthemums

Different colors
And heights
There is another garden

Full of red roses
As red as the loss of love
I have walked

The path between these

¹ This is a poem I wrote in 1984 as part of a course assignment.

Two gardens
Sometimes I sit there for hours

INTRODUCTION

This *Untitled* poem was written when I was a high school junior auditing an English course at The University's² Summer Program. Almost 30 years later, it is still a big part of my life for it is one of the few wall pieces that decorate my office. This poem has travelled with me from the summer of 1984 on a beautiful green acre campus to 2012 on a cloudy day in December in my office overlooking the barren trees that line the path between North and East Halls.

I often look over to see what "title" I should give this poem, and that title seems to change on a regular basis. This poem is truly an act of identity construction, a political act that is very much connected to the personal and the professional (Freire, 1998; Hurlbert, 2012). It was in the act of trying to find myself, constructing and negotiating my identity in different spaces with different individuals, that I was able to write this poem. This poem is simple, yet, meaningful. Some would argue that autobiographic creative writing is meaningful for everyone. I further argue that my autobiography layered in poetic discourses constructed around the "epistemological principle of the unique ... provides its readers with specific insights into individual, personal human experience and linguistic expression" (Hanauer, 2003, p. 69) embodies who I am. Then and now, I do know that writing, specifically writing in English as my additional language, has a critical place in my life as a language learner, language teacher, and teacher/researcher educator in the field of TESOL teacher education.

Depending on where I am and what my roles are, *Untitled* written in 1984 provides me with a sense of belonging and at the same time, a sense of uncoupling in the midst of my divided world as depicted in two renditions written in 2013 while constructing this article.

A garden full of beautiful Chrysanthemums
Different colors and heights
Often feeling privileged for being different,
Being the only Korean girl in the class
Being hugged by my teacher everyday
Being envied by others due to my exotic-ness

Another garden full of red Roses
As red as the loss of love
Disenfranchised for being different
Feeling as if I am mute, deaf, and dumb
Questioning the new land of freedom
Questioning the American Dream³

The division began when my family and I immigrated to the U.S. in 1976. Just as I felt in 1984 when I first began the process of writing this poem, I am at a loss at times when it

² All names and institutions are pseudonyms.

³ The black text is from the original *Untitled* poem written in 1984 while the blue text is what was added when writing this article in 2012/2013.

comes to my identities as a hyphenated individual. I wrestle with the divide that separates the languages, cultures, and many responsibilities that dictate who I am and who I have become and who I should be as a woman living in the midst of discourses that continue to privilege dominant ideologies that contradict my lived experiences, yet permeate through every fiber of my being as a member of an academic community. I am not a white male from the middle-class nor do I come from an elite, educational lineage. I was not born into a dominant racial community. I do not consider myself a native speaker, though many peers argue that I should call myself one since my speech is perceived to be accent-free. I am one of the few minority woman teacher-scholars teaching and researching at my institution that is predominantly white. I am in a field that is often marginalized due to the perception that comes with native speakers being the ideal English teachers and that English language learners must not use their first language while learning English. As a result of my lived experiences, I privilege discourses and pedagogies that unveil my attributes as one way to humanize what I do as a teacher educator preparing teachers to teach English as an additional language.

Consequently, in this paper, I explore the following research questions:

1. In what ways, do I perceive and understand my lived experiences as a Korean-American, second language writer, English teacher, teacher-scholar, and Mama PhD⁴?
2. How can my understanding of my lived experiences further influence the work I do as a teacher educator?

I highlight four distinct but interconnected areas of my life history that I refer to as *autobiographic poetic waves*. These waves are layered with the complex underpinning of racial, linguistic, gendered, classed, and professional identity politics that continue to not only liberate but also subjugate me at times. Ultimately, the contents of these autobiographic poetic waves reveal being critically conscious of the identity politics of individuals from (dis)enfranchised spaces. As argued by Hanauer (2012b), the rendering of my autobiographic poetic waves is in itself part of a (de)/(re)construction of my meaningful literacy, which embodies my multiple, ever-changing and contradictory identity options. Discussion of these waves is interspersed with the extended version of *Untitled* written in 1984. Ultimately, this article blends poetic and autobiographic discourses and explicates the relevance of this discursive inquiry in humanizing the field of TESOL teacher education.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: FROM EVOCATIVE GENRES OF WRITING TO AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL-POETIC INQUIRY

Proponents of evocative genres of writing such as autobiography, narrative inquiry, auto-ethnography, life-history narratives, and other forms of personal narratives state that evocative genres of writing to autobiographical-poetic inquiry are appropriate methodological and pedagogical tools for examining lived experiences of individuals and/or groups (i.e., Bell, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, , 2013; Denzin & Lincoln,

⁴ According to Evans and Grant (2008), Mama PhDs refer to a group of “mothers in the academy who are often at a disadvantage compared to their childless peers” (p. xx) due to having to balance family and work in academy.

2000; Florio-Ruane, 2001; Hanauer, 2012b; Hurlbert, 2012; Pavlenko, 2001, 2002; Van Maanen, 1988). Using life history narratives and other evocative genres of writing can be one way to understand the multiple influences that have impacted teacher candidates' decisions to enter a teaching career (i.e., Park, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, in press; Johnson, 2007; Mawhinney, Rinke, & Park, 2012; Margolis, 2008; O'Brien & Schillaci, 2002; Rinke, Mawhinney, & Park, in press). Research also demonstrates that many English language teaching (ELT) and teacher education courses promote the use of narrative writing projects as a way to increase the English language learners' (ELLs) level of confidence and fluency in writing as well as providing teachers opportunity to be critically reflective (i.e., Park, 2008, 2010; Carroll, Motha, & Price, 2008), thus connecting writing and identity (Ivanic, 1998; Park, 2010, 2011, 2013). As such, research on lived experiences can become a platform for understanding the personal stories that lead to the construction and negotiation of identities.

In Norton's (2000) seminal work, she explored the experiences of five female Canadian immigrant ESL students through a longitudinal case study approach, one that sought to understand the multiple identities that were constructed and negotiated, based on gender, class, and ethnicity. Using interviews and diary studies, Norton revealed the issues of power manifested in their identities as language learners in an unfamiliar Canadian context. The identities of immigrant women and language learners were understood as negotiated in their sociocultural contexts. The immigrant women's identities became even more powerfully visible as writers because they revealed their "autobiographical, discursual, and authorial identities" (Norton, 2000, p. 148). Overall this process of making writing a meaningful act was further supported by the works of Ivanic (1998) and Hanauer (2012b).

Following a similar line of genres of writing, Hanauer's (2003, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2013) work on poetry writing, Hurlbert's (2012) writing as healing, and Pavlenko's (2001) work on the bilingual writers' cross-cultural autobiographies all target the heart of exploring writing as a meaningful literacy events. These events uncover individual's lived experiences complicated by the ways in which issues of social (in)justices impact the ontological and epistemological spaces of individuals. Construction of these meaningful literacy events that unfold our (re)constructed and (re)negotiated identities can begin the process of healing that is often negated and marginalized in publications embraced in higher education. They are meaningful as the events represent the participant's perspectives (Maxwell, 1996 as cited in Hanauer 2012b). Accordingly, by encouraging genres of writing such as autobiography, auto-ethnography, poetry, narrative inquiry, and other personal narratives in academia, there is a collective push toward revealing how gendered, racial, linguistic, and classed identities have further (dis)enfranchised individuals. More importantly, these genres, as argued by Hanauer (2003), promote "the experience, concept, and understanding of human diversity" (p. 71) and further "present a subjective reworking of the individual's biographical concept and thus allows the researcher an insight into the hidden conceptual and emotional world of the individual" (p. 78).

Using expressive writing of both poetry and autobiography, this study illustrates the divide that comes with the languages, cultures, and many responsibilities that dictate who I am, who I have become, and who I should be as a woman living in the midst of discourses that continue to privilege dominant ideologies that contradict my lived experiences, yet permeate every fiber of my being as a member of the academic community. This study represents my negotiation of how I embrace the continuum of privileges and marginalization (Evans & Grant, 2008; Park, in press). Following Furman's (2007) methodological rendition of juxtaposing his poems about the deeper meanings of life (i.e., death, identity, meaning,

nothingness, etc.) and his personal narrative reflections on those poems, Hanauer's (2012a) powerful piece presents a collection of two poems that were written in an attempt to understand the Holocaust and his relationship to it. Hanauer (2012a, 2013) promotes a methodological approach that gets at the heart of unspoken, painful, and horrific stories that have been re-lived by him as a second generation Holocaust survivor. As such, creative writing, poetic inquiry, auto-ethnographic rendering, and other critical ethnography of individuals' lived experiences can become a set of tools for "... depicting the unique expression of the poem [as] the message and experience. ... the central feature of a poetic writing is the unique construction, of a personally meaningful cognition of an artistic experience, thought, or feeling" (Hanauer, 2003, p. 77).

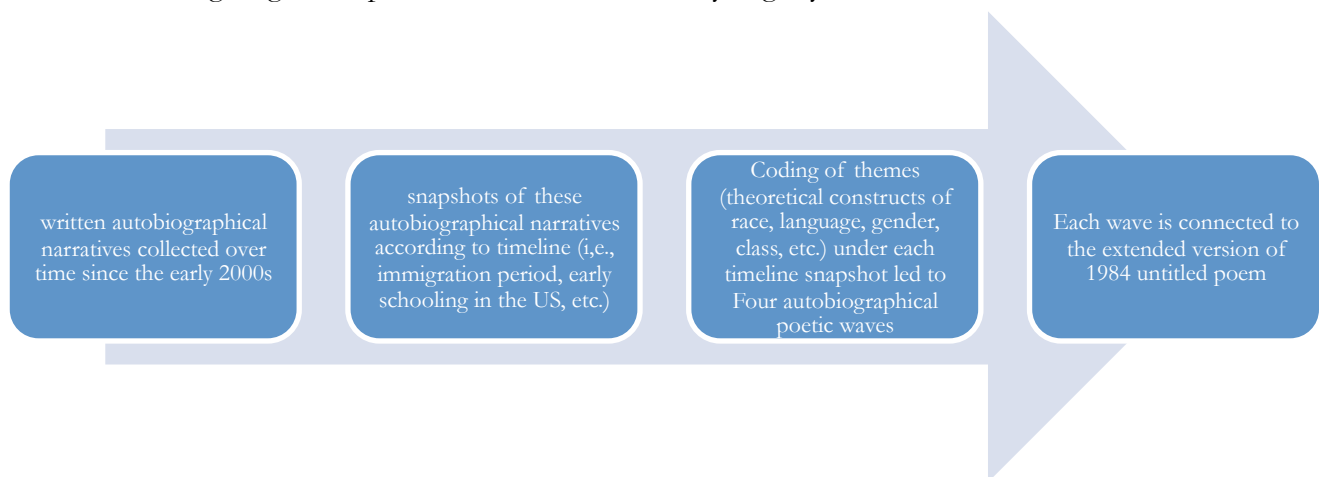
My Autobiographical Writings as Data

I have been collecting autobiographical writings since early 2000 when I commenced my doctoral work at University of Maryland, College Park. These autobiographical writings were completed between 2000 and 2006 as part of course assignments, research projects collaborated with faculty and other doctoral students, and portions of teaching materials at the community college. My additional data are the *Untitled* written in 1984 as well as the extended versions of this poem written while writing this article between July 2012 and May 2013.

Flowchart of Data Analysis

I compiled my autobiographical writings completed since 2000 into one electronic document. Then, I categorized the events chronologically from Immigrating to the U.S. to Securing a tenure-track position at the current institution. Connecting the chronological events to theoretical constructs of race, gender, and class intersecting with language as the overarching theme, I was able to separate my autobiography into four distinct but interconnected stages (refer to as autobiographical waves) of my life history⁵. I read through each autobiographical wave several times as a way to construct the extended versions (blue text) of the poem I wrote in 1984.

The following diagram depicts how I went about analyzing my data:



⁵ Due to limited space, I have selected certain stories for this particular autobiographical-poetic inquiry.

Learning from and moved by the work of Hanauer (2012a, 2012b, 2013) coupled with my personal communication with Hanauer on ways in which I can refocus this study, my autobiographical-poetic writing is an epistemological and ontological revolution that approaches my life history as four distinct but interconnected autobiographical waves: (1) Immigration and the Emergence of Hyphenated Identities; (2) Legitimization of Hyphenated Identities in Higher Education; (3) Epistemological and Ontological Revolution; and (4) Perception of Mama PhDs. The discussion of these waves is interspersed with the extended version of the 1984 poem. I focus on the loss, divide, privileges, (dis)enfranchisement, and identities that have permeated my life history since my family's immigration to the U.S.

THE FIRST AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL-POETIC WAVE: IMMIGRATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF HYPHENATED IDENTITIES

*A garden full of beautiful Chrysanthemums
Different colors and heights
An adventurous new beginning
Full of hope and promise for better education
Maintaining Korean at home
Learning English at school*

*Another garden full of red Roses
As red as the loss of love
Culturally irrelevant curriculum
Being the only visible minority
Without English language knowledge
Wounded by series of name calling*

Although immigration is perceived as an act of adventure, a new beginning of one's life in a land of promise and prosperity, I came to experience my emigration from Korea as a disenfranchised experience in the English-speaking world. The white teachers whom I encountered in 1976 did not, or perhaps could not, relate to me, though they comforted me in their arms whenever I shed tears of frustration and anger. I did not think anyone who was white or black could ever understand my Korean identity. I had a different way of knowing and understanding the world due to my Korean heritage. Equally problematic was that my white teachers could not make the classroom experience culturally relevant for me (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2000; Turner, 2003) since I was the only Korean student in the entire school. I was the only visible minority who could not understand the English language. There were other visible minorities (e.g., African-Americans and Latinos/as) in the class, but they, at least, had access to linguistic capital. I quickly experienced this new context as a strange place, full of unfamiliar faces that spoke an incomprehensible language. Although my first mission was to master the English language, other issues surfaced—my African-American and White classmates called me “chink” and told me to go back to my country. Ironically, the name-calling and unfriendly faces somehow made me stronger. It motivated me more to continue learning in U.S. classrooms, although I felt that no one could understand what it was like to be in my shoes. I think the names I was called have somehow been a part of my struggle to truly identify myself as a non-native English speaker (NNES), and to embrace a self-concept characterized by cultural and linguistic multiplicity (e.g., Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004).

THE SECOND AUTOBIOGRAPHIC-POETIC WAVE: LEGITIMIZATION OF HYPHENATED IDENTITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*A garden full of beautiful Chrysanthemums
Different colors and heights
Often feeling privileged for being different,
Speaking English as an additional language,
Embracing diversity and significant milestone
Being championed for my bilingual-ness*

*Another garden full of red Roses
As red as the loss of love
Ridiculed for accented English
Perceived as an illegitimate English teacher
Seen as an inferior and lesser gender
Without a Ph.D. in hand*

With a psychology degree, I found my first full-time job as an educational intern in a private K-12 school in the US. My role was to bring visibility and multicultural awareness to a predominately white institution as an intern in grades 1-3. Although I realized that teaching in general, specifically a lower grade level was not part of my undergraduate training, I wanted to teach, to remain in an educational setting. In 1995, after living and being schooled in the U.S. for 20 something years, I returned to my native country, Korea. Through relatives in Korea, I found a job as an educational consultant and a program developer in one of the foreign language institutes in the heart of Korea. I did not have any background in ESL teaching nor did I know how to develop and create curriculum for English learners, but my bilingual and bicultural identities secured the job for me. I acted as a cultural and linguistic broker between the director of the institute and the native English teachers. My first year in Korea opened my eyes to culturally challenging situations. It was difficult for Koreans to appreciate that I was more westernized than Korean and that my upbringing for the past 20 years in the U.S. had already shaped my identities to some degree. Even more puzzling to them was that I spoke Korean fluently just like them.

As far as the teaching was concerned, I had an opportunity to teach a diverse group of students: Teaching K-12 Korean students as well as teachers of K-12 Korean students in Korea. These K-12 teachers in Korea were struggling to meet the new English curriculum requirements handed down from the Department of Education in 1997. After two years of working as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher and administrator, I left the language institute to work in a university just outside of Seoul in 1998. I needed this change in the English language learning and teaching environment because I saw language institutes in Korea as money making business enterprises that failed to take into consideration the diverse needs of English language learners.

Although I was thrilled to land a position in a university, I felt discriminated against due to issues involving my gender, my ethnicity, and my linguistic abilities when interacting with Korean professors at times. I felt that I was not taken seriously by the Korean professors when I shared my ideas about how to make the English language program better. In addition to my “inferior” gender, which meant that I was not taken seriously when making decisions,

there was an invisible power struggle between the Koreans and the Korean-Americans. Korean-Americans were not seen as “real” Koreans since they abandoned their heritage to “assimilate” into American cultural practices. Furthermore, Korean professors perceived my highly proficient English language ability as a threat rather than as a resource. I realized that my racial identity positioned me as a Korean English professor, but my linguistic and teaching identities positioned me as a Westerner/American. Dis-encharmed by the societal level discourses that further marginalized my identity as a bilingual Korean-American English teacher in Korea, I returned to the US in July of 1998. I wanted to expand my professional credentials by entering Master’s and Doctoral degrees in TESOL. These higher education degrees in TESOL field, such as MA and Ph.D., would provide me with more legitimacy as a university ESL instructor in Korea I applied to a MATESOL program in the U.S. and began my studies in January 1999 at American University.

THE THIRD AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL-POETIC WAVE: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

*A garden full of beautiful Chrysanthemums
Different colors and heights
Knowledge constructed around
Race, class, gender and language
Privileging identities as an Immigrant NNES
Affect what, how, and why I research*

*Another garden full of red Roses
As red as the loss of love
Politics around conducting research
Disenfranchised by immigrant NNES-ness
Language intersects race, gender, class
Affect what, how, and why I research*

In my MATESOL program, I was the only “hyphenated” NNES in the sense that I was the only immigrant NNES while the rest of my NNES colleagues were international students. Although my international NNES colleagues saw me as a resource, I felt alone as the only hyphenated individual. Because my experiences were so different from theirs, it was difficult for me to claim an insider positionality vis-à-vis my NNES colleagues. Even with these challenges, I successfully completed my MATESOL program and started my Ph.D. program in TESOL in order to commence work as an educational researcher.

I entered the field of educational research in 2000. In one of my first graduate seminar classes in the doctoral program, *Theory and Research on Teaching*, I came to understand and accept the ever-present conundrum that conducting educational research is political. Similarly, I also came to understand that the capitalist system seldom works justly for *all* people. Upon that realization, coupled with the initial questions emerging from my interactions with NNESs in both programs, I chose to focus my research on the theme of race, class, gender, and language teacher identity in TESOL programs. This focus highlights my commitment to researching the lives and experiences of East Asian women teachers (as well as other visible minority teachers) of English in U.S. TESOL programs. Specifically, I explore how an English teacher’s perceived linguistic identity impacts her teacher identity, and how English teachers’ self-marginalized racial and linguistic identities coexist with their

privileged classed and academic identities. A series of published articles has demonstrated my commitment to continue to focus on how women teachers of English from all over the world (specifically, the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia) experience their U.S. TESOL program and thesis research. My research has evolved into seeking out my ever-changing identities and those of women similar to myself in the context of our multilingual and multicultural backgrounds, values and beliefs in schooling and pedagogy, and our lived experiences as second language learners, for they “affect what, how, and why I research” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 268).

THE FOURTH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL-POETIC WAVE: PERCEPTION OF MAMA PhDs

*A garden full of beautiful Chrysanthemums
Different colors and heights
Embracing my competing identities:
Teacher-Scholar, Mom, Spouse
Another garden full of red Roses
As red as the loss of love
Societal level discourses places
Mama PhDs as
Less productive and less competitive*

Finding the courage to explore, voice, and advocate

This line of critical research inquiry has sustained me for many years, and upon completing my PhD in 2006, my competing identities as a newly married woman in her late 30s started to take precedence: Staying pregnant was the most difficult task I had ever embarked on in my life. My husband and I had given up having a child of our own and were preparing documents for an international adoption, so we sought the assistance of the Catholic Charities of Baltimore. Around the same time, I was asked to teach not only sections of advanced adult ESL courses at the community college, but a couple of sections of in-service teachers at the state university as well. Although I was seeking a tenure-track position upon completing my PhD my difficult pregnancy coupled with being a married woman limited our mobility as a couple. In August 2007, I was pregnant for the third time. By the time I was 15 weeks into my pregnancy, I was fully immersed in teaching two courses at the community college and two courses in the teacher education program. I also had three successful on-campus interviews for a tenure track position while seven months pregnant.

In August 2008, I began my tenure track position at my current institution as a new mom of a three-month-old child. Although nothing was directly stated to me about my identity as a new mom, I sensed it. I felt it. I lived it. A perceived social stigma associated with being a newly minted mom in a world of academia often pushed me to do more than I was asked to do, and these issues appropriately surfaced in my teaching and scholarship inquiry. According to Evans and Grant (2008), many mama, PhDs experienced (self-perceived) marginalization around their abilities as teachers and scholars in academy. There was an expectation that moms in the university would be less productive and more problematic in terms of teaching and scholarly activities. In my own case, I sensed that I was offered below my well-deserved salary rank due to societal level discourses that often place

women with children on the margin. We are often seen as less productive and less competitive. Perhaps this perceived attitude unconsciously made me resist further negotiating with the administrators on my deserved salary rank. At the same time, I believe this perceived attitude and discourses around what mama, PhDs could or could not do pushed me more than usual to do my best in my teacher scholarship. Ironically, although there was an element of self-perceived marginalization as a result of my assigned and embraced identity, I was also comfortable being at my institution, where I was able to do the type of work I was prepared to do. My consistency in teaching and scholarly productivity surprised my colleagues, yet I was doing what I had set out to do as an assistant professor in a tenure track position. According to Hanauer (2012b), “personal insight” focuses on “integrating a reflective process that leads to a deepened appreciation and understanding of personal experience (and, ultimately, greater understanding of the human condition)” (p. 5). My identity as a new mom in a tenure-track position has allowed me to shine, manage my time, and be just as or more productive than my peers in my programs.

While I was being productive at school, my son thrived at the university day care. Although I often felt unscrupulous for leaving him at the day care for long days, he seemed to do well. Due to my guilty conscious, I capitalized on the hours I had at school away from my son. In the first couple of years, I often came in at eight in the morning and focused on my teaching and research until five in the afternoon, when I left to pick up my son. On days when my husband picked him up, I stayed later at school to get more work done. Even on the days when I did not teach, I came to school and locked myself in my office, which was about five by seven feet in size with no sunlight. Since 2008, bearing the name of my institution, I have published six single-authored refereed journal articles, one co-edited book, one book chapter, three co-authored refereed journal articles, and I have six refereed journal articles in preparation. In terms of teaching, I taught across the programs represented in my department: 12 undergraduate classes and 14 graduate classes in total. I consistently received high evaluations on areas that mattered for students and their learning. I share these details to illustrate the profound effect that my identity as a new mom in academia, coupled with my lived experiences, has had on my work in higher education thus far, and what this may mean for TESOL teacher educators in similar situations.

MOVING TOWARD A COLLECTIVE VOICE IN HUMANIZING AND PROFESSIONALIZING OUR TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP: RE-TOOLING TEACHER EDUCATION ACROSS HIGHER EDUCATION

What’s the value of autobiographical-poetic inquiry in teacher education programs? The four autobiographic poetic waves are snapshots of my personal, academic and professional life history. I share these autobiographical poetic waves and my reflections to encourage others to publicly share the work we do in the field of TESOL teacher education. More importantly, I hope to raise our awareness of and consciousness about what it means to do advocacy work around issues of (dis)enfranchisement that we teachers face, especially the visible minority women faculty in higher education.

Situating my line of research in teacher education, I am continuously reminded of how my teaching informs my research and vice versa. In attempting to bridge theory and practice, I am able to unfold my own identities as a teacher and teacher educator learning side-by-side

with my students. Through these learning moments, I am reminded of the need to re-conceptualize existing courses to bridge the theory and practice divide. Similarly, promoting autobiographical-poetic and other evocative writing genres unveils my identity as a second language learner and immigrant to those who enter my university classroom. Narrating my own story was a difficult task but it was a task I had to start in order for me to begin sharing my stories of experiences and identity constructions with my students. This was a rejuvenating opportunity for me to document my personal history as a second language writer navigating the web of relationships interconnected by race, gender, social class, and language ideologies to “humanizing the language classroom” (Hanauer, 2012b, p. 1) for multilingual writers from all walks of life who enter my classroom.

I embrace and mark the unfinishedness (Freire, 1970) of my personal history with some implications for connecting personal history to TESOL teacher education programs as well as a means to explore development of teacher educators in higher education. My suggestions include:

- Integrate evocative genres of writing throughout teacher education courses.
- Endorse family literacy events and writing, especially for teachers and their students who come from diverse languages and cultures.
- Promote life/personal history as a legitimate methodological approach to conduct teacher research in the fields of TESOL teacher education.
- Assist teachers and their students to understand the connection between personal history-teaching/learning-identity.
- Explore the complexity of teaching as well as the relationships between gender and teaching and gender and parenting.
- Dismantle native speakerism and English only policies in the field of English language teaching around the globe.
- Sanction teaching for equity, access, and social justice.

This poetic rendition is just the beginning of my work as a teacher educator at my current institution. Revisiting and sharing my story was the beginning of my development as a teacher educator and continuing to work toward sharing with other faculty, both men and women, what it means to navigate and balance both our experiences as mothers and teacher-scholars in the academy. As I finalize this article, I received an official letter from my university of my tenured and promoted faculty status as of fall 2013. With a tenured associate professor status, I know that there is more to do in working toward gender and racial equality in the ivory tower. As Kuhn, Mills, Rowe, and Garrett (2008) argue, “[We] can promote motherhood professionally—and it is a political statement” (p, 245). I hope to continue to work toward making my current institution a family-friendly environment.

Without the support of my parents, brothers, husband, and son, I would not be where I am today. Their support and courage has allowed me to grow as a person. I am also encouraged and supported by colleagues at my current institution who have allowed me to shine at my own pace and develop as a teacher-scholar in an unfamiliar disciplinary space of English, Composition, and Literature, yet find harmony in constructing my TESOL teacher scholarly niche to transform the unfamiliar into the familiar so that I can do the work I am prepared to do. My colleagues at the IUP English Department in general and Graduate Studies in Composition & TESOL, specially have and will continue to witness my

development as a teacher educator, giving me the support I need to learn from and with the students who enter my life and the classroom. For that, I am grateful.

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