

Zuang Liu

Rob Martinelle

WED ED200 A1

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### Journal Entries 1

This week we read chapters 3, 5 and 10 of *Is Everyone Really Equal* by Sensoy DiAngelo. Through their perspective, I gained new understandings of self-awareness, class oppression, and culture.

In the class, the professor said, "If we want to have deep self-reflection, we must deliberately train our brains to do that." This reminds me that as a member of mainstream culture, I need to step away to feel the preferential treatment we receive in society and how minority groups are oppressed "invisibly". It is extremely difficult to detach one from the society in which one is socialized. We are like "a fish that is immersed in water" to society (DiAngelo 36), which makes it almost impossible for us to completely detach ourselves from the influence of society on our way of thinking. People who are in the dominant position in different situations often rationalize their experiences, such as whether they have a voice, how others treat them, or if they fit in the groups or not. Instead of thinking about the reasons behind these experiences, which could include their race, their family's class status and the amount of assets they have, or their gender, they simply enjoy the benefits of mainstream culture and take it for granted.

I used to be one of those people, but after reading these chapters I began to reflect on myself. Another idea in the book is that the best way to learn about oneself is through other people. When I meet people from different social classes, family backgrounds, and educational levels, how do they relate to me, and how do I feel about these connections? More importantly,

how do we apply our understanding to the real world, because understanding theory is not enough. In my daily life, I do not frequently come into contact with people of all races (because China is a single ethnic country). As a person who has grown up in China for 19 years, I cannot empathize with the cases of oppression and struggle between races mentioned in our class, but learning these theories definitely help me in my future career, especially when my patients have multiple identities, so I can analyze better and choose my words more carefully.

Another idea that resonates with me is about how we are socialized to prejudge people. I once read a book, in which the author wrote a sentence that goes "你对我的百般注解和识读, 构不成万分之一的我, 却是一览无余的你", which translated into "your cognition and definition of me is not one percent of the true me, but a hundred percent of the true you." A person's view of another person is only a reflection of his inner thoughts and not the appearance of another person itself, so we can actually infer that person's psychology to a certain extent through other people's views of themselves. When the professor introduced the precautions of our field experience in class, there was a slide that compared "what I say" and "what I mean". One of the comparisons is "Teachers should not treat students like this ", which can be translated into "I would not treat students like this". There is a bias here, we do not take into account the reasons why teachers treat students in this way, perhaps what is inappropriate in our eyes is actually beneficial to students.

A person's culture is composed of many aspects, such as family economic condition, gender, sexual orientation, personality, etc. If we can understand a person's culture, then we can predict their behavior, such as their preference for products, or reactions to certain circumstances. Culture can also be associated with oppression because some part of a person's identity may be in the mainstream stream while others are oppressed. I am male, but I also have a skin condition,

which is only a small part. My identities are all intertwined to compose me, and this requires us to take these questions more seriously.

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## Journal Entries 2

At the end of last week's class, the professor asked us to go home and think about our own definition of "being educated." My first reaction was that being educated means that one can act according to one's own will and have one's own unique opinion about everything. However, during this week's lesson, we looked at other people's definitions of "being educated". After the group discussion, I came up with several conclusions.

The first is that we have different points of focus when answering questions. My own answer was based on a personal level and mainly explained the effect of "being educated" on someone from the inside out. Jesse's answer focuses more on the social dimension, roughly summarizing the education system, saying that "being educated means that one is socialized to understand concepts, rules, and functions within the framework specified by upper society." My friend Aaron's definition is that "being educated means that one knows how to learn and continues to educate oneself throughout one's life," which adds the concept of time to his answer.

Second, of the four articles we read last week about "being educated," the one that struck me the most was Rogers' *Personal Thoughts on Teaching and Learning*. Not only is this article fascinating, because it challenges the general education system and society's definition of education, but also because some of his views can resonate with Aaron's definition. At the beginning of the article, he mentioned that he "cannot teach another person how to teach" (Roger

264), which shows his lack of confidence in teacher education. Next, he expressed that he only wanted to learn knowledge that has a significant impact on behavior, which reminded me of Progressive Education in the four Philosophies of Education we learned in this week's class, because this philosophy states that education should serve the growth of students from the perspective of students. Roger also mentioned that he thinks the existence of "degree" is against the original intention of education, because being awarded a degree means the end of education, while real education should be throughout life. This echoes Aaron's point of view and is another reason why his article impressed me deeply.

Speaking of Philosophies of Education, after learning in class, I was shocked at how I fell into the "trap" without realizing it. Ever since I entered college, one question has been lingering in my mind, that is, "How can I apply what I have learned to my life to find a good job and earn my tuition back?" which is completely typical of Economic Education. Perhaps in the process of growing up, not only school, but also family and society, instilled in me the idea that the point of going to school was to get a good job, so that I thought it was "normal". Still, I'm a little confused, because in our society today it's hard to live without a paid job, and even if we're aware of the philosophy of our education, we can't change what we must do.

As for the volunteer teaching on Thursday morning, I was in charge of two classes: the music classroom and the ABA classroom. There was so much to reflect on, and I had so many questions, but there were a few that confused me. First, why is the electronic piano in the music room facing the wall instead of the center of the room? I noticed that students rarely communicated with each other while practicing the piano, and the teacher walked around the classroom to make sure everyone was participating. Secondly, when dealing with students in ABA the classroom, how to take the most appropriate measures for students with different

symptoms to ensure that they do not feel dangerous. During lunch break, a student, Santiago, whose jelly exploded in his lunchbox. Since he was nonverbal, he had to express his frustration by crying loudly. Meanwhile, the other five students in the class reacted differently, which made me wonder: How do teachers manage students with different symptoms of autism at the same time?

My primary school is large in scale. There are six grades in the school, each grade contains six classes, of which the number of students in each class is about 30 to 40 people. The school also has an art building, science building, library, full-size playground, orchard, roller skating field, baseball field and so on. I have to admit that the size of Adams Elementary School is much smaller than I expected, but it is easier to deepen the bonds between students and teachers in a small school.

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### Journal Entries 3

While reading Spring (2016) and other related materials, I can't help but think of a phrase I once heard: "The curse of knowledge is that you can never go back to the mental state before you knew it." In Douglass (1995), he mentioned that he sometimes felt that being able to read was not a blessing but a curse, because it made him see his destiny and gave him a sense of powerlessness that he could not change the current situation.

When I reflect on the different kinds of schooling we learnt in class that are almost "invasive", my first reaction is "who gave these invaders the power to change the status of the indigenous people, and what purpose did they want to civilize the indigenous people for?" But I also realized that perhaps the development of culture is an unstoppable process, as I mentioned at the beginning of the curse of knowledge, as a higher level of cultural and technological "invaders", do they have obligation to bring these advances to the relatively less-developed indigenous people, even if the methods may not be satisfactory?

For the invaders, their ideal schooling, according to the Cross' Identity Development Stages, is one in which students are expected to be in the Pre-Encounter Stage: to follow their guidance and accept their language and culture. For Indigenous people, however, I think they are at the Immersion/Emersion Stage: From the students' continuous escape from residential schools mentioned in Child (1996) to the Indian War in Spring (2016), it is obvious that they expressed relatively strong protests against the actions of invaders.

While reading Spring (2016), I noticed a very contradictory phenomenon, that is, when Sequoyah gave the missionaries an 86-character alphabet, they refused to use it, because using this alphabet requires the ability to speak Cherokee. If the purpose of the missionaries was to civilize the indigenous peoples, why didn't they put in the time and effort to learn the local languages? I was even more shocked by the next paragraph, in which the missionaries argued that once the indigenous people learned to write and read in their own language, they would refuse to learn English, which was an unacceptable result. To which I say, "So?" It seems to me that helping indigenous people learn their own language will not affect the process of indoctrination, but will make them realize that these outsiders are showing respect, which is what I think is a crucial quality in their ideal schooling process. If you want real changes to happen, sacrifices have to be made. In my opinion, these invaders force indigenous people to accept their own schooling and even language under the condition of not fully understanding their language, social habits, culture, history and other aspects, and take it for granted that learning these knowledge is necessary. To that end, showing respect and empathy is a priority.

Regarding our field trip on Thursday, my experience so far has not matched my expectations, but in a good way. First of all, I chose the music classroom when we first decided which class to join for each of us. However, after entering the class, I found that the music class in Adams Elementary School ended at 10 am every Thursday morning, while our field trip would last until 12 at noon, which gave me two hours free. Thus, I decided to follow the last class that takes music in the morning, the ABA class, and act as their teaching assistant.

To be honest, this is the first time I've worked with autistic children, and the fact that I've had very little contact with autistic children in my life has made me start to reflect on how my identity might cause that. My classmates in primary school, as I remember, are all able-bodied,



no mental illness, and motivated children, but I am not sure whether it's because I did not pay attention to those children who need help or our school simply refused to accept such children at the very beginning of the interview. All in all, this was my first experience of the classroom environment of autistic children and how schooling works.

I did learn about autism in a relatively formal way, as one of the units of the ELA course in my high school sophomore year. Still, we learn more about autism from a writing perspective and don't have a deep understanding of special education methods. One of your comments in journal 2 asked me for my definition of "most appropriate." What I'm trying to say is what level of physical contact is acceptable with my students, how I should communicate with them, and whether I need an extra reward to guide their behavior (because I have noticed that one of the guardians will occasionally use candy as a reward when the students complete a certain instruction).

In our discussion session on Monday, you mentioned that you could help us contact the principal of Adams Elementary School to explain the content of the autism classroom to our three students working in ABA classroom, I believe that would be very helpful.

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Rob Martinelle

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#### Journal Entries 4

So far, I have been interacting with the students and teachers of the ABA class for four weeks. I have to say that when it comes to discussing the “talents” of the students, I find that I cannot view my students through the so-called “normal” lenses. In last week’s morning meeting, we had a conversation with the principal of Adams Elementary School about the school and her personal story. The part that interested me was the inclusivity of autistic students within the school. Despite constraints such as the school’s size, lack of funds, and a shortage of teachers, the principal has made an effort to group the autistic students into four classes based on their age. The class I am in consists of autistic students in grades one through three. Compared to the first two classes, my students have shown a certain level of rationality, and through observation, I’ve noticed that each student’s response varies when facing different subjects. For example, Brody’s sensitivity to music is expressed by dancing and shouting along with songs during music class, David’s sensitivity to art is displayed during break time when they draw letters of the alphabet on white paper, William’s Sensitivity to words is shown through frequent questions to me like “What color is this?” “What shape is this?” “I’m William,” “She’s Miya,” “Hi Mr. Tim,” and answer my question when I ask him in return. Mr. Brighton displays strong leadership among the teachers in our class. Typically, during math class, we divide into small groups, with each teacher responsible for 2-3 students, and I am responsible for one student. Whenever we form these groups, Mr. Brighton gives clear instructions, and all the students promptly follow them and take

their seats at the assigned tables. However, I am a bit confused about the arrangement of teachers within our class. I've noticed that some students have one or two instructors dedicated to them, while others do not. One of the students, Santiago, is non-verbal, and it seems that his instructor is not a school staff member but an external teacher, possibly hired by his parents to serve as a personal tutor for him.

The harm caused by the stereotype of the “model minority” is immense, and it is rooted in the idea created by white elites: the belief that success can be achieved through hard work. This can be used to explain the “internalized dominance” brought up by Sensoy & DiAngelo. The White majority often appears to have a “not my problem” attitude towards the oppression experienced by minority groups, including those represented by Asians, because they believe that in a land of opportunities like the United States, anyone, regardless of their race and ethnicities, can achieve success with enough effort. White individuals often overlook the privileges that come with their own culture, skin color, language, and identity, as these aspects are seen as “the way things should be.” The stereotype of the “model minority” has obvious detrimental effects on members of minority groups. Firstly, there is significant differentiation within the broad category of “Asians.” People from regions like the Philippines and Indonesia are more likely to experience oppression and exclusion compared to individuals from countries like Japan, South Korea, and China, due to factors such as their native country’s economic and cultural status. Secondly, some Asian Americans willingly embrace the label of the “model minority” in order to gain acceptance from the dominant group. This further complicates the resistance against the stereotype of the “model minority.” It is essential to recognize and challenge such stereotypes, as they not only perpetuate harmful biases but also contribute to the invisibility of the unique challenges and experiences faced by various Asian communities in the United States.

In addition, while reading this week's materials, another reflection I had was that Asian Americans cannot fully assimilate into any ethnic group. Let's take Chinese Americans as an example. During my sophomore year in high school, we had a transfer student in our class, a boy who had been studying in a U.S. high school but was forced to return to China due to the pandemic. In the class, very few students interacted with him. Despite the fact that, on the surface, we all had Chinese faces, he didn't completely belong to our culture. In fact, some students from other classes even referred to this transfer student as a "banana person," meaning that he appeared to be yellow on the outside like a banana but had white inner core, criticizing the fact that even though he looked Chinese, his behavior, thoughts, and values were more American. I thought about this because this week's reading materials mentioned the difficult situation of Asian Americans in the United States, but when facing Chinese society, these individuals also struggle to fully assimilate. My question is, Where on earth can they truly find their cultural identity?

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### Journal Entries 5

This is the fifth journal of our semester, and now, as I look back at some of my views and expressions in previous journals, I believe there are areas that can be redefined. First, in journal entry 3, I mentioned that cultural development is an unstoppable process, and as a group with more advanced cultural development, there is an obligation to encourage the development of relatively backward groups. Here, Erin raised a question about what I meant by "more advanced cultural development" and who defines it.

When I wrote this sentence, I had in mind a scene from a Thanksgiving story. However, when I seriously contemplated two different societies, I realized that what truly matters is for whom it's important. I live in a society composed of people similar to me, and this society is sustained by the things we collectively believe in. When discussing levels of development, my mind naturally associates it with the elements that support our existence, such as technology, education, cognition, and so on, as types of comparison. When these categories are ingrained in the mind, it leads to the default assumption that one society is more advanced than another, as I initially wrote. So, who defines it? As I mentioned earlier, what truly matters is for whom it's important, in other words, whose perspective we are considering. It's as if there's an invisible sense of superiority, and when some people compare it to another society, they only focus on the outcomes, like the national economy, technological level, and so on, without considering the

underlying reasons, in other words, they don't consider things from the other society's perspective.

In the case of Ms. Mancinie, she is facing a situation where her ELL (English Language Learner) students are about to be prohibited from using their native language in the classroom. This policy was developed because some teachers believe that when ELL students use a language that teachers cannot understand, their conversations are likely to be unrelated to the class, and these incomprehensible languages are seen as a disturbance to the teachers, hindering the classroom's progress. These teachers did not take into consideration the challenges that ELL students face. English is not their first language, so when they want to participate in the classroom, they have to go through an additional mental process of translating their thoughts into English every time they receive or express information, not to mention that some expressions or vocabulary may be unfamiliar to ELL students, making it more difficult for them in class. What's even more important is that using their native language can enhance a sense of community and lay the foundation for students to better engage in the classroom.

If Ms. Mancini wants to prevent this phenomenon from happening, she can take the following measures. Firstly, she needs to assess the actual situation of these ELL students in her classes. She should observe the differences in their performance when using their native language versus English, the impact on their learning outcomes, and their overall learning experience. To do this, she can collaborate with Ms. de Leon and other multilingual teachers to sit in on the classes, record, and analyze students' performance. Secondly, she can interview colleagues who support the "English Only" policy to understand the reasons behind their support for this policy. With this information, she can attempt to address the issue through alternative means, rather than outright denying ELL students the ability to use their own language. Lastly,

she can attempt to have conversations with parents of both native English-speaking students and ELL students. She can gather opinions from the parent community regarding the use of multiple languages in the classroom. Based on the feedback collected from both the parent community and the insights gained from the previous two steps involving the students and teachers, she can then present the situation to the school principal.

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### Journal Entries 6

During today's recess, I interviewed our class teacher, Mr. Brighton, about his views on the future of autistic students. Since raising this question in Tuesday's discussion session, I've been contemplating. However, despite the scenes of interacting with my autistic students at Adams Elementary School every week, I still cannot envision these children standing on their own. Mr. Brighton's response was that these children can also have a happy life. While he can't draw conclusions for every student's parents, the fact that these children are present in school indicates that their parents are willing to provide quality education for them. They do not complain about the differences between their children and others; instead, they make the utmost effort to help them through childhood.

I admit that what he said makes sense, and I am willing to believe that their families genuinely love these children from the bottom of their hearts. However, my concern lies in their connection with the outside world. We live in a society made up of people, and survival is impossible without interacting with the outside world. We cannot be certain that every person these children encounter in the future will be patient and communicative with them. Assuming this is true, they will also find it difficult to respond appropriately to external stimuli. I find it challenging to imagine how they will survive on their own without assistance. Focusing on the present, I believe that the school is indeed making efforts to prepare students for the next stage,



including basic mathematical thinking and language skills. As for their future, all I can do is hope that they will find happiness.

I believe that when imparting knowledge about racial oppression to white individuals, it is both impossible and unnecessary to avoid addressing white fragility. The idea is to make white individuals uncomfortable as it is an essential part of their genuine understanding of themselves and the oppression experienced by other races. DiAngelo points out that white individuals often think that only those who interact with "minorities" or exist in a "multicultural" environment need to learn about anti-racism education. However, this notion further separates the white population from other ethnicities, creating a society that is exclusively white. This can result in their inability to comprehend true racism because they lack exposure and understanding of races other than their own. Growing up in such an environment can also make them naturally center themselves, neglecting the perspectives and needs of individuals from other races.

Certainly, triggering emotions such as awkwardness, anger, and silence in white individuals after addressing white fragility is not enough. The crucial aspect is the process of reflection. White individuals need to examine why these emotions arise and gain a deeper understanding of their own identity. Therefore, addressing white fragility is necessary, as it ensures that white individuals become aware that they are also part of the discussion on racism and provides motivation for them to bring about change.

The responsibility of educating white individuals about racism indeed should be shouldered by white people. However, this is not because, compared to people of color, white people are more inclined to believe in viewpoints taught by other white people, which itself involves racial discrimination. Instead, it stems from a historical and societal responsibility. From a racial perspective, white individuals typically occupy a dominant position in society,

leading to widespread inequality and oppression experienced by non-white groups. Therefore, in order to create a harmonious society, white individuals have a responsibility to understand the structure of racism and actively work towards eliminating their own biases. Importantly, they need to pass down this commitment through generations, ensuring that the idea is upheld through the efforts of successive generations.

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### Journal Entry 7

As the field visit activities come to an end, I have gained new insights after observing and learning about the teaching style and students of Adams Elementary School. It is challenging to determine whether my elementary school life qualifies as “good schooling” based on these on-site assessments. Adams Elementary School is completely different in scale from my elementary school. Compared to Adams, we have more students, more teachers, a larger campus, more comprehensive teaching facilities, etc. However, one advantage of small-scale schools over large-scale schools is the harmonious relationships among the faculty, students, and the entire campus, which I consider extremely important (I identified the teacher-student relationship as the primary factor for a quality school in this Tuesday's class activity). In my elementary school, we often had limited opportunities to get to know students or teachers from other grades, while in Adams, it seems that every student and teacher is familiar with and trusts each other, which pleasantly surprises me.

At the same time, my definition of “good teachers” and “bad teachers” has undergone a change. I used to believe that a responsible teacher should always lend a helping hand to students in need, regardless of the situation, and provide meticulous care. However, through my interactions with students with autism and their guiding teachers, I realized that my definition was too extreme. Sometimes, ignoring and imposing consequences can be beneficial for students. During a meeting with the supervisor of special education students, I learned that

students making noise or exhibiting strange behaviors might be seeking the teacher's attention. Therefore, ignoring them can be more effective in stopping such behavior than responding to it. Another experience in my class involved a student making a mistake and receiving verbal correction from the teacher, followed by an emotional outburst. Just as I was about to offer comfort, another teacher stopped me and explained that these students need to experience unpleasant consequences as a way of learning to avoid such behavior in the future.

Through watching the documentary *Education Inc.* last week, I identified two obstacles to education justice. First, there is a lack of substantive involvement in the decision-making process for student groups. The documentary depicts numerous instances of conflicts erupting within school boards, with teachers or students protesting in most cases. Some resort to more drastic measures, such as sitting on the floor in front of the podium and pledging not to leave until the situation improves. Similar to what we saw in the previously watched *Walk Out*, these students resist because they feel their need for attention and unmet demands for quality education are not being addressed. In the documentary, teachers and students take turns speaking before the school board, resembling a scenario where a defendant faces an unyielding judge to plead for their freedom. While we cannot deny that the school board's funding enables the implementation of educational initiatives, is that enough reason for them to become the unchallenged “judges” defining what is good or bad? If the school's design does not benefit the students, then what is the purpose of it all? To address this issue, my suggestion is to implement a tiered selection of representatives at various levels, including class, grade, school, city, and state. Start by selecting student representatives at the class level, who would then participate in grade-level meetings to choose grade representatives, and so on, until one or more students are elected to be involved in

the decision-making process. This process would require the support of teachers and parents, along with the need for students to have strong resilience in the face of pressure.

Another obstacle is the singular criterion for evaluation. After the release of standardized exams, it seems that the success of students is directly determined by their scores. While standardized test scores can to some extent reflect a student's academic performance, they are by no means the entirety of a student. In my past educational experiences, I have seen too many students, parents, teachers, and schools that treat grades as everything. Aside from scores, almost everyone adhering to this mindset fails to truly benefit from education. This approach tends to oversimplify students and their achievements. High scores are rewarded, low scores are punished, overlooking the effort students put in and the possibility that mainstream education may not suit every student. To avoid this scenario, teachers should be adept at identifying students' strengths and encouraging them. They should actively communicate with parents, striving to alleviate the academic pressure on students. Simultaneously, a differentiated teaching approach should be adopted, finding the best educational methods that suit each student individually.

Zuang Liu

Rob Martinelle

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Journal Entry 8

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