

CONNECTED TEACHING

**Relationship, Power, and Mattering in
Higher Education**

Harriet L. Schwartz

Foreword by Laurent A. Parks Daloz

Afterword by Judith V. Jordan



Stylus

STERLING, VIRGINIA



COPYRIGHT © 2019 BY STYLUS
PUBLISHING, LLC.

Published by Stylus Publishing, LLC.
22883 Quicksilver Drive
Sterling, Virginia 20166-2019

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying, recording, and information storage and retrieval, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Schwartz, Harriet L., author.

Title: Connected teaching : relationship, power, and mattering in higher education / Harriet L. Schwartz ; foreword by Laurent A. Daloz ; afterword by Judith V. Jordan.

Description: First edition. | Sterling, Virginia : Stylus Publishing, LLC., 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018046110 (print) | LCCN 2018059671 (ebook) | ISBN 9781620366387 (ePub, mobi) | ISBN 9781620366394 (uPDF) | ISBN 9781620366363 (cloth : acid-free paper) | ISBN 9781620366370 (paperback : acid-free paper) | ISBN 9781620366387 (library networkable e-edition) | ISBN 9781620366394 (consumer e-edition)

Subjects: LCSH: College teaching. | Teacher-student relationships. | Interaction analysis in education.

Classification: LCC LB2331 (ebook) | LCC LB2331 .S377 2019 (print) | DDC 378.1/25--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018046110>

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-636-3 (cloth)

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-637-0 (paperback)

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-638-7 (library networkable e-edition)

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-639-4 (consumer e-edition)

Printed in the United States of America

All first editions printed on acid-free paper
that meets the American National Standards Institute
Z39-48 Standard.

Bulk Purchases

Quantity discounts are available for use in workshops and
for staff development.

Call 1-800-232-0223

First Edition, 2019

INTRODUCTION

Our roles and lives as professors are scrutinized and changing. Budget cuts mean more work for fewer people. Politicians and popular discourse question the role of higher education. We face pressure for constant evolution in a technology-rich and ever-changing culture. We are expected to be fluent in the classroom and online in a teaching context that may still include chalkboards and requires competence with learning management systems; some of us are expected to transfer courses that we have taught for years in the classroom to the online environment. Whether we are among those who embrace technology or those who dread it, students expect 24/7 accessibility, and the smartphone is often a venue not only for communicating with faculty but also for reading and responding to assignments. There are also students for whom technology is an obstacle because of mind-set or finances, and we need to manage that too.

The digital age has helped shape a new generation of students. Some millennials respond to authority with less deference than previous generations, even viewing the syllabus or an A- as negotiable. Regardless of whether we as faculty are willing to negotiate assignments and grades, the faculty role is changing. Our authority is less top-down and more dynamic, more about artful presence. While some provocateurs would suggest the faculty role is becoming obsolete, I argue that our role as teachers is as important as ever and is evolving profoundly. Our authority is shifting from vertical to horizontal. Understanding our inner lives as teachers and our relational stance and practice with students is vital, as increasingly our role is less about transmitting information and more about inviting learning and shaping the nuance of dynamic learning spaces.

I believe relationships are central to this work—the relationships we have with individual students and with classes and cohorts. I believe relationship is the fulcrum and the spark, the valley and the vista—the essential driver of teaching and learning.

My ongoing quest to understand relationship as a central force in teaching propels this book. I am drawn to those moments of energetic deep learning and all that makes these powerful moments possible—as relationship, identity, and emotion form the heart of connected teaching. We must be open to and seek relationship, understand our sociocultural identity

(and how this shapes our internal experience and the ways in which we are met in the world), and vigilantly explore and recognize our emotion in the teaching endeavor. These elements—relationship, identity, and emotion—form the foundation of connected teaching.

In the following section, I situate connected teaching among the writings that have most influenced this work. Next, I introduce Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT), a foundation of this book, and then I explore sociocultural identity and emotion, as they relate to connected teaching.

Relationship as Essential in Teaching and Learning

Though they are not often acknowledged in the teaching literature, Black women activist educators including Nannie Helen Burroughs, Anna Julia Cooper, and Septima Clark identified relationship as important in teaching and learning. Burroughs, Cooper, and Clark began their careers teaching children and later played significant roles in shaping adult and higher education. In 1901, Burroughs founded the school that would become The National Trade and Professional School for Women and Girls (NTPS), an institution that offered Black girls and women access to junior high, high school, vocational training, and junior college (Johnson, 2000); she served as president until her death in 1961 (Easter-Smith, 2015). Cooper, educated at Oberlin College, Columbia University, and later the Sorbonne, taught at Wilberforce University in Ohio and later served as the second president of Frelinghuysen University in Washington DC, from 1930 to 1941 (Johnson, 2000). Clark created and led programs, including The Citizenship Schools in the 1950s and 1960s, to educate southern African American adults (Charron, 2009).

Burroughs, Cooper, and Clark recognized relationships as essential for teaching and learning. For example, Clark's Citizenship Schools were based on the relationships between educators and their communities. "Every Citizenship School teacher came from the community in which she taught and began class by asking her neighbors what they wanted to learn" (Charron, 2009, p. 6). Burroughs lived her commitment to forming relationships with her students at NTPS where she knew students by name and knew of their families, dined with students, and talked with them about their grades and personal matters (Downey, cited in Johnson, 2000). Each of these women were known as caring educators, committed to their students' success (Charron, 2009; Johnson, 2000).

Though these early educators saw connection as fundamental, a deep consideration of relationship as central in higher learning has been largely

absent in the literature. There is no dearth of literature positioning education as a process between teacher and student; however, education scholars have typically focused on understanding the learner, learning theories, and practice (e.g., Cross, 1981; Mezirow & Associates, 1990, 2000; Weimer, 2013). Although these writers often see learning as a process between teacher and student, they tend to focus on understanding the background and learning experience of students rather than on what goes on between teacher and learner. Rarely overlooking the topic completely, some of these essential books include chapters on the teaching relationship, but rarely is this a central focus.

bell hooks, Laurent A. Parks Daloz, Parker Palmer, and Stephen Brookfield changed the conversation, exploring in greater depth what goes on between teachers and students. Building on the work of Paulo Freire and Thich Nhat Hanh, hooks writes from a personal place and considers relational themes including excitement, presence, and care. “To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (hooks, 1994, p. 13). Where others discuss the importance of engaging students in reflection (thus focusing on students), hooks understands the role of relationship and identifies the import of teacher self-disclosure for engaging student reflection.

Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive. . . . It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material. (hooks, 1994, p. 21)

For hooks, education is about transgressing the constraints of race, gender, and class. Thus, her presence in the lives of students must not replicate prevailing power structures. If in her role as a teacher, she reifies a power-over position with her students, she further entrenches the very dynamics she seeks to confront. To teach students to challenge systems of power, privilege, and marginalization, she must interrogate her place in the lives of her students. hooks shows us a way forward, an example of working to undo tacit assumptions about power while also holding on to the roles and responsibilities of teaching. Brookfield also explored power and identity in teaching, from his perspective as a white male, first in 1995 with *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* and then with additional depth and insight in the book's second edition, published in 2017.

Daloz focuses extensively on the relationship between educator and student. He considers teaching as mentoring, “a special kind of relationship,

a caring stance in the context of our students' lives" (Daloz, 1999, p. 15). Teacher mentors provide support, challenge, and vision; they help us recognize our moments of transition and transformation; and they welcome us to a new world (Daloz, 1999). Daloz (1999) suggests that significant teacher mentors accompany us on the learning journey and serve as proof that the journey is doable (p. 207). The first time I read Daloz, I understood this to mean that mentors help us transition *to a new sense of self* that develops as we learn or make a career change. More recently, I imagine he might infer something deeper, that teacher mentors help us *into the uncertainty of learning*, through the transitional period of (often) greater confusion and a sense of not knowing. And then they help us to the other side in which we might adjust our sense of self and honor our insatiable desire to continue learning.

Like Daloz and Brookfield, Palmer has inspired generations of teachers. In *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (Palmer, 1998), he also explores the inner lives of teachers and the teaching space as a relational space. Like Daloz, Palmer (1998) pushes us to explore "the inner landscape of the teaching self" (p. 4), including intellectual, emotional, and spiritual paths.

As important as methods may be, the most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is insight into what is happening inside us as we do it. The more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching—and living—becomes. (p. 5)

Palmer (1998) elevates the importance of self-awareness and identity not only for teaching but also for living—reinforcing his call for authenticity and the integrity of wholeness.

Palmer (1998) suggests "good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness" (p. 11), and they connect with students not through their teaching methods but "in their hearts—meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self" (p. 11). He illustrates his premise with the image of the heart as a loom on which a fabric is created, a fabric that connects teacher and students, the fabric of a learning community. For Palmer, the teacher's integrity and the fabric of trust, woven *with* students, provide the foundation that make challenge and support possible.

In the undivided self, every major thread of one's life experience is honored, creating a weave of such coherence and strength that it can hold students and subject as well as self. Such a self, inwardly integrated, is able to make the outward connections on which good teaching depends. (p. 15)

Brookfield (1995), Mezirow and Associates (2000), and Weimer (2013) also consider the relational space in teaching. Brookfield (1995), pushing us to be critically reflective teachers, warns against “teaching innocently” (p. 1) or without interrogating our intentions, actions, and assumptions about the effect we have on our students. He recognizes vulnerability, imperfection, power, and identity as inevitable elements of the teaching experience (Brookfield, 2015, 2017). Like Daloz and Palmer, Mezirow and Associates (2000) speak of teacher identity and the importance of supportive relationships in teaching and learning. Similarly, Weimer (2010) describes the internal elements of good teaching: “emotional energy, the will to keep caring, intellectual stamina, creative approaches, vigilance, faith in the power of feedback to prompt learning, and perseverance to find the way back from failure” (p. xi).

While hooks inextricably links identity and teaching, Daloz’s awareness of the influence that race, gender, class, and other forms of identity play in teaching relationships increased over time. In the 2012 update to his seminal *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners*, Daloz acknowledges that he seeks to remove “some of my more sexist assumptions” (p. xxiv).

I aspire to follow hooks’s lead to remain vigilant regarding the influence of identity in the teaching relationship. RCT, the human development theory at the heart of this book, calls on us to hold social constructions of identity and cultural context as central to understanding relational practice.

A Brief Introduction to RCT

RCT fits naturally as a framework to help us understand meaningful academic interactions and relationships. Indeed, the founding scholars proclaimed that growth-in-relation happens not only in therapy but also at work and school and in friendships (Miller & Stiver, 1997). They describe the rich mutuality of meaningful exchanges between people in particular roles (therapist and client, teacher and student) and among colleagues, friends, and family members who are present with each other, listen closely, and respond with respect.

Because each person can receive and then respond to the feelings and thoughts of the other, each is able to enlarge both her own feelings and thoughts *and* the feelings and thoughts of the other person. Simultaneously, each person enlarges the relationship. (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 29)

At first glance, Miller and Stiver’s words may seem to be a routine description of typical conversation, of people listening and responding to each other. However, I believe that their insight is in recognizing that meaningful interactions extend each person’s sense of self and experience (and the relationship).

That is to say, the key to growth-in-relation is that we expand each other's world. In the context of teaching, an interaction may seem either mundane (clarifying an assignment) or potentially life changing (encouraging a student to consider doctoral study). Big or small, these moments potentially broaden a student's landscape of understanding and possibility. Though not an RCT scholar, Mayeroff (1971) suggests that in patient caring, we give "the other room to live" and we expand "the other's living room" (p. 24). Perhaps in teaching, we expand each other's learning space.

Jean Baker Miller launched the development of what would become RCT in 1976 with her publication *Toward a New Psychology of Women* in which she argued that Western culture's privileging of the individual self over relationships was built on a male model of development and was damaging to the well-being of both women and men. She argued that by celebrating and prioritizing the self rather than relationships, our culture encourages people to separate rather than connect and to believe in the myth of solo achievement. The value of connection and relationships is at the heart of this book.

Miller, a psychiatrist, began collaborating with three psychologists, Irene Stiver, Judith Jordan, and Janet Surrey, developing what was initially called Stone Center Theory, later named self-in-relation theory, and then relational theory (Jordan, 2010). In 1981, they began presenting and publishing, as they introduced Stone Center Theory to relevant academic and professional communities. They were met with resistance but continued, and over time additional scholar-practitioners, including Maureen Walker and Amy Banks, joined the growing movement. Readers may see parallels between RCT and Carol Gilligan's work. RCT scholars and Gilligan and her students, all located in eastern Massachusetts, connected and shared their work at biannual "Learning From Women" conferences, sponsored by Harvard Medical School (Jordan, 2010). Later in the 1980s, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule published the first edition of *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*. Belenky and her colleagues briefly mention a connected teaching model, an approach similar to contemporary notions of learner-centered teaching in which the expert seeks to understand the learner and establish trust.

From the start, Miller saw the role of gender in power dynamics, exposing and challenging the power that men held collectively and individually over women in a male-dominated and male-centric culture (Jordan, 2010). As new thinkers joined the movement, they pushed Miller and the other founding scholars to think beyond gender.

Early RCT theory was skewed by the fact that the original writers were all white, middle class, and well educated. While these writers as women

protested the distortions imposed mostly by men on a psychology of women, they unfortunately duplicated this distortion by talking about women's voice rather than women's voices, revealing how the assumption of universality by the privileged dominant group creeps in to even the most conscious attempts to incorporate diversity and appreciate power inequities. Women of color, lesbians, other sexually identified women, physically challenged women, and women from different economic backgrounds personally communicated . . . that "the theory group" was committing the very distortions of exclusion they were protesting. (Jordan, 2010, p. 11)

This early resistance within the relational theory community led to another name change in the theory's evolution, and relational theory became RCT, an acknowledgment and ongoing reminder that in relationship, people bring their experience of cultural context and that the relationship itself always occurs within the larger cultural context.

Identity—I'm More Aware of Being White Than I Used to Be

What does being white have to do with teaching and teaching relationships? Typically, we are far less aware of our identities that grant privilege than those that bring marginalization, discrimination, hate, and violence. I do not have to think about being white to avoid race-related confrontation in my daily life, whereas colleagues and students of color often do. Conversely, I *am* aware of being a Jew and gay. I am routinely aware of being a woman and less cognizant of being cisgender. Previously, I worked in institutions that were largely class privileged and was far more aware of my middle/working-class roots than I am now, teaching at Carlow University, more of a first-generation space.

Identity invokes privilege and marginalization and thus shapes learning environments and teaching relationships. When I understand both the power and the marginalization imposed by my identities, I become a better educator, as I am more likely to recognize: obstacles and injustices faced regularly by students, the manifestations of power and marginalization in my relationships with students, and the limits that my worldview potentially levies on my teaching and thus my teaching relationships (Brookfield, 2017; hooks, 1994). This last element may be the most difficult to grasp; it relates to Brookfield's caution about "teaching innocently" or without an awareness that our teaching and advising may not be received by students as we intend.

Teaching and Emotion

To authentically and effectively be in relation with our students, we must also strive to know ourselves well. In addition to understanding the influence of our own social identity locations, we are more effective when we know ourselves emotionally and understand our tendencies and patterns when working with students. Douglas Robertson, a leading scholar of college teaching and emotion, proposed that only an intersubjective approach can accurately unpack the teaching–learning dynamic, and to understand the process of good teaching, we must consider what is going on not only for our learners but also for ourselves as teachers (Robertson, 1996, 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2001a). Stated more simply, the question is not whether teaching is an emotional experience but whether we acknowledge or deny the emotion inherent in teaching (Robertson, 1996, 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2001a; Schwartz & Holloway, 2017; Slater, Veach, & Li, 2013; Snyder-Duch, 2018).

Emotions are central in the teaching experience. Consider the following two examples:

1. I am reading a student's dissertation draft and realize that I am disproportionately agitated by errors and absence of American Psychological Association (APA) style. I continue reading, and my frustration grows. Finally, I realize I am too annoyed to read clearly for content, and I put the draft aside. Later, I identify my frustration and its source—I feel as if the student is wasting my time; it is late in the semester, I am tired, I have a lot of work and want to get this done; the APA problems slow my process. I remind myself that the student is in the early stages of her work, and I can refer her to the learning center for help with APA style. Later, I return to the draft and read for content. Finally, upon further reflection, I challenge my perception that the student was wasting my time, a frame that inaccurately personalizes the process of reviewing student work—she was not doing anything to me—and the view that she was wasting my time likely increased my agitation.
2. The class is Social and Cultural Context of Counseling. I ask students to write a reflection in response to our discussion on race, a discussion immediately following several police killings of unarmed Black men and in the heat of the 2016 presidential election. I see one white student sitting with her arms folded, refusing to engage (at least in writing). In my mind, I acknowledge my concern that she will walk out of the room. I also know I am invested in wanting students (particularly white students) to at least consider the role that race plays in their experience, and I

know I sometimes feel frustrated when they resist. By quickly naming my emotions and not judging them, I am able to remain steady despite the tension in the room. I recall several of this student's previous comments and realize that if she is at all willing to engage with these ideas, she might need to do so outside the classroom; she may not even be ready to engage in the internal process of writing as she sits with her peers and me. I give her space. She does not leave the room and sits quietly through the follow-up discussion. I do not know to what degree she considered the perspectives shared subsequently by her classmates; however, I know I was able to reframe my assumptions about what she was thinking and to maintain my focus in the classroom.

Throughout this book, I share moments like the first where I had to step away and reflect to sort myself out, and other experiences like the second where I responded effectively in the moment. I also share thoughts about the kinds of student interactions that continue to challenge me and about experiences of failure. The point is, I am a more effective teacher when I can identify my emotional responses to subpar work and excellent work and to student disengagement, over-engagement, push-back, complaint, joy, and unexpected interest in me and my work. Self-awareness makes me a better teacher. And striving for greater self-awareness is an ongoing journey. The quest toward greater understanding of emotion and teaching is another thread throughout this book.

Onward

Our profession provides an opportunity to engage in dynamic relationships wherein we come to know ourselves more clearly, refine our approaches to teaching, deepen our thinking, and find a place of mattering in the world. Our role and priority as teachers is first and foremost to focus on student learning. However, if we are open to being changed and influenced, the journeys we take with our students can be life changing for us as well.