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# Putting the framework to work: An ethnographic exploration of race-based professional development

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## **Putting the Rodriguez Framework to Work: An ethnographic exploration of race-based professional development for educators**

### **Abstract**

Louie F. Rodriguez' (2012) *Teachers College Record* conceptual paper issues a call to “researchers, practitioners, and policy makers [to]...problematize the concept of recognition...and to introduce a conceptual framework to understand, examine, and help rectify the crisis facing [Latina/o youth]” (p. 1). Though Rodriguez has explicitly named Latina/o youth within the title of his Framework of Recognition, Rodriguez clearly states his intent to extend applications of the Framework beyond Latina/o youth to include other marginalized students, including “students with disabilities, English language learners, immigrants, gay/lesbian/bisexual youth, and students who identify with alternative forms of music, art, and culture” (p.25). Indeed, Rodriguez expresses his hope that “readers may create their own forms of recognition, build on this proposed framework, and apply it to other marginalized populations” (p.26). This study takes up the invitation and puts Rodriguez' Framework to work as a lens through which to view race-based teacher professional development, resulting in a new Framework of Professional Recognition for Educational Equity (FPREE) which makes visible the multiple aspects that must simultaneously be in place and attended to by educators seeking to interrupt and eliminate systemic inequities for marginalized students.

*I think for me [the TFEE seminar] was the first time that someone told me "Speak about education and race together, collectively, and don't try to mince words or have a detour in the conversation to make it about socioeconomic status or gender," but to talk about race and education and how the two go hand in hand.* (Janice<sup>1</sup>, study participant)

### **Rodriguez' Framework of Recognition**

Louie F. Rodriguez' (2012) *Teachers College Record* conceptual paper issues a call to "researchers, practitioners, and policy makers [to]...problematize the concept of recognition...and to introduce a conceptual framework to understand, examine, and help rectify the crisis facing [Latina/o youth]" (p. 1). Rodriguez has built the Framework of Recognition upon an analysis of several theorists' (Freire, 1971; Taylor, 1994; Bingham, 2006; Young, 1990; hooks, 1994; Van Manen, 1996; Urrieta, 2003) which he then applied to Frantz Fanon's (1963; 1967) theories of recognition. While it is understood Rodriguez' Framework was not originally conceived specifically for application to race-based professional development, Rodriguez' stated goal is "to shift the role of teachers, school leaders, counselors, coaches, and other school adults to that of a transformative mentor for whom the political role of teachers and teaching is deliberate" (p.13).

Rodriguez explains that his Framework and the accompanying pedagogies are "aimed at engaging educators, researchers, and other stakeholders in an exercise by acknowledging the social, political, and economic conditions that plague marginalized communities with substandard schools serving low-income youth of color...to facilitate "pockets of hope" for social and political change" (p.5). Though Rodriguez has explicitly named Latina/o youth within

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<sup>1</sup> All study participants' names are pseudonyms.

the title of his Framework of Recognition, Rodriguez clearly states his intent to extend applications of the Framework beyond Latina/o youth to include other marginalized students, including “students with disabilities, English language learners, immigrants, gay/lesbian/bisexual youth, and students who identify with alternative forms of music, art, and culture” (p.25). Indeed, Rodriguez expresses his hope that “readers may create their own forms of recognition, build on this proposed framework, and apply it to other marginalized populations” (p.26). This study puts the Framework to work as a lens through which to view the TFEE seminar participants’ meaning making of their experiences and accepts Rodriguez’ expressed invitation to build upon his work.

Rodriguez identifies five components of recognition: relational recognition, curricular recognition, contextual recognition, transformative recognition, and pedagogical recognition. He has created a graphic representation of these components which includes a brief, bulleted list of descriptors for each component (see Figure 2). In this study, Rodriguez’ Framework was adopted as an analytical frame for the interviews to compare and contrast the experiences of the TFEE participants against the Framework to identify both convergence and gaps. Hence Rodriguez’ Framework has been extended and adapted to provide guidance for creating meaningful race-based professional development for educators, resulting in the Professional Framework for Educational Equity, or the FPREE. Each of Rodriguez’ Framework components

is described in alignment with study data.

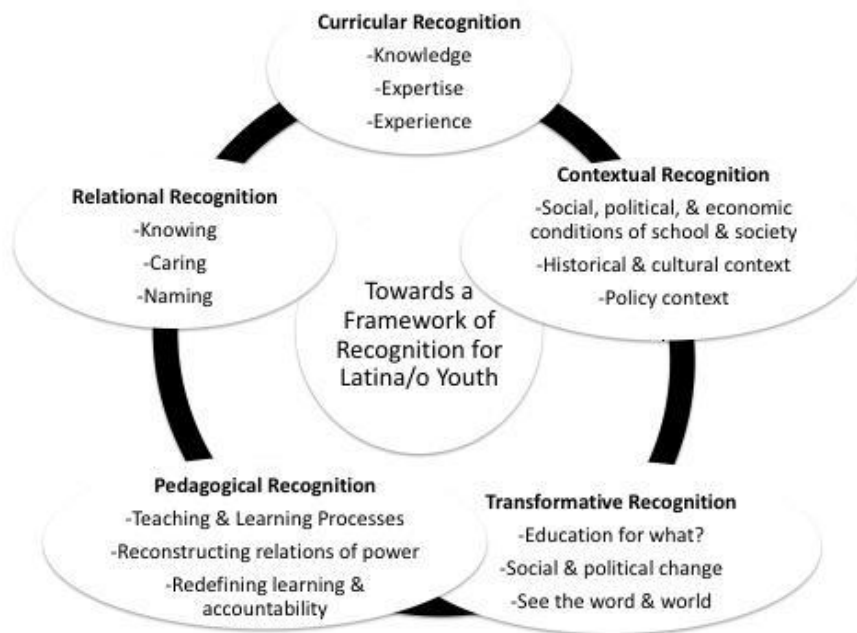


Figure 1 Rodriguez (2012) Framework of Recognition for Latina/o Youth p. 12

## Details of the Study

This critical feminist ethnographic study explores the meaning making of a group of educators engaging in an anti-racist professional development seminar and identifies the personal and professional connections to the TFEE seminar participants made in the months following the seminar. The nine diverse educators participated in a five-day, residential, intensive seminar known as the Teaching for Educational Equity (TFEE) seminar in 2010. Particular attention is devoted to a small subset of four urban educators who continued to meet and work together voluntarily for more than two years following the conclusion of the TFEE seminar. Author 1, the primary researcher of the study, attended and participated in the TFEE seminar alongside the other nine participants and continued meeting with the subset group of four urban educators for more than two years.

In light of a critical feminist (Lather, 1986; 1991; 2007) approach and its attendant epistemological commitments, a collaborative analysis method was developed for use with this subset group four local TFEE participants to collectively sort the final round of transcribed responses to open-ended interviews cut into individual question and answer strips. The participants first negotiated the categorical sorting, then discussed and revised the category names, and finally experimented at great length to graphically represent the relationships between the categories to This same analytic method—one based on the technique of Affinity Mapping<sup>2</sup>—was also used by the researcher to analyze the Round 1 and 2 interviews to categorize and to name experiences and outcomes of the TFEE seminar from participant perspectives (see Author, 2012). Louie F. Rodriguez' (2012) Framework of Recognition for Latina/o Youth provides a theoretical foundation for interpreting the three rounds of individual, one-hour, semi-structured participant (n=9) interviews (Rounds 1 and 2 n=18; Round 3 n=4)

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<sup>2</sup> To learn more about Affinity Mapping, please visit [http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/affinity\\_mapping.pdf](http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/affinity_mapping.pdf)

conducted over the six months following the TFEE seminar. Interview analysis revealed that careful attention to comfort, content, and processes of the TFEE seminar resulted in participants reporting in the following months that they continued to engage in cycles of reflection and reflexivity, as well as making new equity and advocacy commitments as a result of new knowledge acquired during the TFEE seminar. These cycles resulted in changes in teaching practices, new advocacy roles, new collaboration with colleagues and renewed hope.

The TFEE seminar facilitators and participants were purposely racially and ethnically diverse, but were also diverse in their ages, in their professional experiences, in their professional roles, and in terms of the identity of the institutions in which they served at the time of the seminar. Figure 1 includes the study participants' pseudonyms, the racial identity each claims, as well as their professional roles. In bold print in the top four columns of the table, the four urban educators who continued to meet for two years following the conclusion of the TFEE seminar are highlighted. Each of these four (Chloe, Ciara, Janice and Jordan) educators was teaching in separate urban school districts within the same Midwestern metropolitan area and did not know one another prior to the TFEE seminar experience.

<b>Local Study Group of Urban Educators</b>				
Susan	<b>Chloe</b>	<b>Ciara</b>	<b>Janice</b>	<b>Jordan</b>
White	<b>White</b>	<b>Black/ Jamaican</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>White</b>
researcher	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Urban</b>
	<b>Middle school science teacher</b>	<b>High school art teacher</b>	<b>High school English teacher</b>	<b>Middle/High School SPED and ELA teacher</b>
<b>Additional TFEЕ participants</b>				
Adam	Carlos	Diana	James	Sadie
White	Latino	White	African American	Latina
Rural	Rural	Adjunct	University faculty member, diversity/ multicultural education	University staff member
High school ESL teacher	High school ESL Para-professional	Instructor educational leadership		student services specialist

Figure 2 Table of study participants



It is widely known that the demographic makeup of the United States has been rapidly changing and experiencing a growth in ethnic and cultural diversity, most notably in urban contexts (Author 2, 2011; (Howard, 1999; Murrell, 2001). As more attention has been paid to issues of gaps in achievement and opportunity, educators at all levels are seeking out new support and resources to better work within their changing communities. The challenge remains in how, when, and where to help teachers think critically about difference, diversity, and more specifically, to identify the intersections of race, identity, and education. The term *border crossing* is often used to identify an experience for educators that takes place in a space unfamiliar and takes teacher identity as a locus of work. The impact of this work—typically described as self-awareness and new degrees of empathy across cultural lines—creates opportunity for transformations emerging from an intentional form of reflection and questioning of held beliefs and unsurfaced assumptions (Mezirow, 1991). These new components of both teacher preparation and professional development were not included without caveats and cautions however. Giroux (1992) notes that the limits of such experiences may be difficult to gauge; Murtadha-Watts (1998) warns of the inability to ensure that “these initial cultural border crossings will represent full transformations for the students” (p.63) which may ultimately only serve to reinforce stereotypes. Additionally, researchers examining such experiences have discussed the complexities of these types of experiences for teachers involving the process of “racial identity development,” pointing to the tensions experienced by white, middle class teachers working in urban contexts (Wade & Raba, 2003) ( see also Author 2, 2011). A new body of research is growing and focuses on the specific challenges teachers face when learners are disproportionately identified for special needs based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and linguistic difference (Klingner, et al., 2005).

Counter to national trends in the increase of high school completion and college attendance (Education, 2012), the data clearly point to the fact that minority students drop out or are “pushed out” (Eubanks, Parish, & Smith, 1997; Rodriguez L. F., 2012) at alarmingly high rates. As Rodriguez (2012) indicates, minority students, especially those in “high-poverty urban high schools are graduating fewer than half of their students, in comparison with about 70% at the national level” (p. 2). Rodriguez cites what has become an all too familiar litany of the kinds of conditions experienced by minority students in high-poverty urban schools as identified by critical race theorists:

- schools with underprepared teachers;
- schools with fewer resources;
- large and overcrowded schools;
- high drop-out rates;
- disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates for students of color;
- low expectations;
- blatant racism;
- test-centered pedagogies that have been demonstrated to be counterproductive to student achievement;
- students living in severe poverty;
- students living neighborhoods known for violence and multigenerational poverty

(Rodriguez L. , 2012)

Indeed, urban educators may seem to have become nearly numb to these grim descriptors of urban schools, not because they do not care, but because the list feels overwhelming and even painful. Choosing to move beyond mere observation of these realities into a deeper perception

that engages heart, mind, soul and body, enables new insight into the pernicious dynamic of race and education that transforms beliefs and practice into what Rodriguez calls a Framework of Recognition.

**Relational Recognition.** Rodriguez states that relational recognition involves the ways in which Latina/o students are seen, named, greeted, and acknowledged within the school context. Rodriguez cites his own research data which indicate that often Latina/o students do not feel cared for or known personally and that they are frequently alienated by school cultures and processes. Rodriguez claims the physical appearance of Latina/o students (racial features, dress styles, communication styles, culturally-shaped behaviors, etc.) can result in students being racially and culturally profiled at school and thus being denied equal opportunities to learn. Latina/o students indicate to Rodriguez that merely being greeted by name, being known individually, and simply being acknowledged for their work, within what Noddings (1992) has elsewhere called an *ethic of care*, would go a long way toward alleviating this alienation they feel.

Rodriguez identifies such practices as “seeing” students differently, knowing and learning to properly pronounce the given names of all students (rather than imposing Anglicized, easier to pronounce names), and exhibiting trust and respect for students as essential components of relational recognition. He states that, “Educators who practice relational recognition acknowledge the significance of relationships in student engagement and achievement and are willing to enact the simple yet critical gestures of acknowledgment many youth require but are often deprived of within the school context” (p.16).

In this study, interview analysis indicates participants valued being recipients of relational recognition from the seminar facilitators. In fact, participants claimed that being

recipients of relational recognition by TFEE facilitators created the conditions in which TFEE participants could engage in challenging seminar content and processes. TFEE participants identified specific gestures enacted by TFEE facilitators which made them feel welcome, acknowledged and physically at ease (i.e. welcoming physical touches like housing and meals, significant time spent during the seminar getting to know one another, etc.). In addition, TFEE participants stated that facilitative adjustments in scheduling (i.e. allowing some activities to extend several hours beyond the allotted time) and ways of being together (i.e. protocols, agreements, etc.) acknowledged the presence of the actual participants in the room (instead of rigidly adhering to plans prepared in advance for a generic group of attendees) and attended to the unique interests and needs of the particular individuals assembled in this seminar.

TFEE participants felt the level of attention paid to comfort was unusual, but appreciated how the investment of time and attention to comfort, to relationship building, and to getting to know one another ultimately resulted in the group's ability to engage in difficult conversations about race and schooling across racial difference. Participants immediately made strong connections between this experience at the TFEE seminar and how attention to relational recognition could impact their classrooms. For example, Janice here muses over establishing what she calls "a sense of togetherness, of community" within her own classroom and across her high school's faculty, reflecting upon daily practices from the TFEE seminar:

It seems a little corny to discuss agreements every single day and for people to go around in the mornings and have connections, but it really does build up the comfort level that you have with people. So we only had a week [at TFEE]...what kind of community would you have over the course of a school year, or ten years working with people [if you did this in your school]?

In addition, TFEE participants noted the importance of the relationships that developed between the TFEE participants and with the facilitators. The new knowledge and new tools reported by the TFEE participants are evidence that the relational recognition paid learning dividends for participants; this realization convinced TFEE participants of the value of practicing relational recognition in their individual teaching contexts.

**Curricular Recognition.** Rodriguez defines curricular recognition as the practice of considering the ways in which the knowledge and experiences of Latina/o youth are affirmed, validated, and legitimized within the school context. Rodriguez claims that Non-Western or non-dominant worldviews and epistemologies are largely discounted and even ignored as individual educators and other designers of curriculum make decisions. In addition he identifies the impact of deficit-oriented paradigms which define communities of color for many educators. More specifically, in recognition of and alignment with Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) identification of racialized subjects as knowers, Rodriguez holds that white power structures continue to control policies and structures of education, stating that educators "often believe that knowledge exists in district- and state-mandated curriculum and textbooks" (p.16) rather than acknowledging that communities of color "have always asserted and created their own theories and spaces to reconstruct knowledge most applicable and relevant to the social realities of their communities" (2012, p. 17).

In Rodriguez' scholarly work with Latina/o student focus groups he has concluded that they want to be co-creators of curriculum and to define, create, and own knowledge. They need to have their experiences and knowledge bases acknowledged and the realities of their lives understood and legitimized. Students long to be validated and recognized as storytellers, theory

builders, and intellectuals. As Rodriguez states, “Youth of color...bring a complex set of skills for analyzing, theorizing, and predicting realities in their communities and in the world, but institutional policies and practices often fail to legitimize students’ knowledge and experiences” (p.17). Here Rodriguez identifies examples of what Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) have elsewhere identified as *funds of knowledge*, or the rich set resources, skills and knowledge that all students bring with them into classrooms, but that are often ignored or de-valued by teachers when those funds originate in communities of color.

Rodriguez urges educators to embrace the opportunity to explicitly address minority students’ perspectives on political realities as a rigorous engagement opportunity, stating that “Institutions and practitioners who practice curricular recognition see knowledge as a complex and politicized tool that has been used historically to exclude and marginalize Latina/o youth in U.S. schools” (p.18).

During the TFEE seminar, TFEE participants were encouraged to use narrative approaches to share individual backgrounds, histories, and funds of knowledge. As participants indicated, the opportunity to bring family artifacts to share with the group created a deeply meaningful opportunity to tell one’s own story and to hear the stories of the other participants and facilitators. Even months after the seminar, TFEE participants remembered and recited details from the stories of others, stating that these stories had allowed them to understand traditions, values, and perspectives of people who are ethnically, racially, and linguistically different.

TFEE participants identified their engagement with and creation of a historical timeline of education in the U.S. as an opportunity to peel back layers of U.S. history and to examine the impact of institutional and legal policies and practices which have historically excluded all but

privileged white males. TFEE facilitators trusted participants to help shape the seminar and invited participants to co-negotiate each day's agenda. This recognition is evidenced by the TFEE participants asking for and taking approximately 3 hours to complete the Historical Timeline activity, rather than the short time facilitators anticipated would be needed. TFEE participants understood that they could be trusted to make this decision and to know what they needed as learners. TFEE participants report that they were experimenting with similar approaches in their individual locations. In particular, Jordan and Chloe indicated they were each using TFEE protocols and practices, particularly ways of beginning class meetings and other TFEE rituals, to begin class sessions in their own middle and high school classrooms.

TFEE participants accessed important scholarly texts to identify, analyze and theorize about the impact of white privilege in schools. In addition, several TFEE participants spoke on a Personal Experience Panel (PEP) to share their experiences of race and schooling. The stories shared during the PEP were treated with great respect by the listeners; these stories served as rich, anecdotal, first person historical perspectives that provided a backdrop for making meaning of the seminar texts. Janice noted that the PEP panel was composed of "three African Americans, one white and one Latino person" and says she wished later that each TFEE participant had shared their stories because not sharing made her wonder if "they did not have to deal with race." James, who is also African American and who also spoke on the PEP panel, realized retrospectively that he had,

never talked about what a nurturing experience it was to go to a non-integrated school, an all-black school and how nurtured I was there and then the challenges of adjusting to an integrated middle school and some of the ongoing hurt, to be honest with you, that I experienced at the hands of one white teacher in particular and the adjustment to an integrated school...I have thought about that many times over the years but I have never

articulated, never had a forum to talk about it with peers, with colleagues. And as I think about it, I haven't really told those stories to friends and family.

TFEE participants participated in and learned to facilitate Consultancies<sup>3</sup> which validated the existence of each educator's daily reality, knowledge and experiences, as well as each person's capacity to change his/her daily reality. TFEE participants were permitted to personalize and to attend to local issues as each made connections to readings, activities, and action plans. In the months following the seminar, TFEE participants identified ways in which they have taken on advocacy roles in their local contexts.

**Contextual Recognition.** Rodriguez defines contextual recognition as considering the ways in which Latina/o youth are recognized within their social context as a means for educators to understand their experiences in school and beyond. Rodriguez contends that when educators fail to recognize that students of color often experience school culture differently than racial majority students, or even teachers do, the result is that "Schools perpetuate societal inequality by tracking students by race, class, and linguistic difference, by systemically structuring opportunities for students by race, class, and immigration status, and by actively pushing students out of school" (p.18). Rodriguez recognizes that these inequities are not limited to schools, but extend well beyond the schoolhouse doors and beyond school control. Rodriguez concludes that "although inequality at the school level is known to be directly linked to larger forces beyond the control of schools, explanations of educational inequality are framed through the deficit perspective, with a focus on "failing" students and their communities" (pp.18-19). In other words, it is not generally perceived that schools or society are failing minority students, but that failure from minority students is expected and is largely traced back to families and communities of color.

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<sup>3</sup> To learn more about Consultancies, please visit <http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/consultancy.pdf>



Rodriguez claims this deficit view of minority students and their communities emerges when educators lack the “political and ideological clarity [for] assessing how their own personal, political, and intellectual experiences, especially race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, influence their beliefs and practices as educators in schools” (p.19). When one does not understand the implications of their own beliefs and practices, it is quite unlikely that one will see how ignoring or devaluing the beliefs and practices of others creates a deficit view of minority students. For example, understanding minority student behaviors through a contextual lens makes possible the shift in language and thinking that moves the focus from talking about minority students as “dropouts” to seeing expelled minority students instead as “pushouts,” a point similarly identified in the Eubanks, Parrish and Smith (1997) text used during the TFEF seminar

Ignoring multiple realities and clinging to a majority view of school culture results in the creation of barriers for minority students. Rodriguez states that contextual recognition is present in schools and classrooms where students of color “are given opportunities to analyze, understand, and challenge the realities within their social context in order to transform the conditions that actively work to marginalize their existence” (p.19). In order for this to happen, educators must first expand their own understandings and beliefs enough to create space to acknowledge the existence and impact of the understandings and beliefs of all students, but especially those of marginalized and disempowered youth. Rodriguez claims that educators who embrace contextualized recognition will gain “a more complex understanding of students and the challenges they face, particularly for the purposes of responding more favorably to each student’s individual needs so that his or her experiences in school are filled with opportunities rather than barriers” (p.19).

Rodriguez describes contextual recognition as attending to the social, political, and economic conditions of a particular school, its community and of society as a whole. Contextual recognition also includes taking into account the historical and cultural contexts in which a school is situated. Last, but certainly not least, contextual recognition explicitly names and acknowledges the impact of local, state and national policies upon the school, its teachers and its students.

Rodriguez posits in his Framework that students need teachers to recognize the contextual impact of a particular time, place, history and politics on the engagement and learning of a particular school's students. For example, here are just a few examples of the complex questions an educator might have to consider when addressing contextual recognition:

- What does it mean for a teacher to practice contextual recognition in a majority minority high school that has been labeled a “dropout factory”?
- In a middle school whose student population is composed of more than 20% English language learners who have recently arrived from refugee camps, how do educators prepare to teach these students who are learning English, adjusting to a new culture, and sometimes suffering the consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder?
- How are educators and their students impacted by state and national policies which impose standardized testing and accompanying mandated curricula?
- What does practicing contextual recognition look like when the teacher does not share the same racial, economic, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds as the students and the school community?

TFEE participants identify a variety of ways in which they experienced contextual recognition during the TFEE seminar. TFEE participants spoke frequently in each round of

interviews of the impact of the dilemma protocols in which they each engaged both as a presenter of a professional dilemma and as a facilitator for another presenter. Prior to arriving at the TFEE seminar, each participant was asked to prepare to present a professional issue in which he/she felt stuck and unsure of what to do or how to respond. The Consultancy protocol which was used by the majority of presenters allows for significant time at the beginning for the presenter to establish the contextual background of the scenario. This is followed by a series of clarifying questions which are asked by the group members who are participating in the Consultancy. TFEE participants remembered intricate details from one another's dilemmas even six months following the conclusion of the TFEE seminar. They also report remembering and relating to the emotions and efforts exhibited by their fellow participants. Presenters, like James, state that they had felt stuck for "Weeks! Months!" and that being listened to deeply as he shared the details made it possible for him to make himself vulnerable with a group of people he had only known 2 or 3 days.

TFEE participants told stories of the places where they practice. Listeners learned to ask carefully constructed questions in order to better understand the historical, social, economic and political background knowledge of the stories they were hearing. Participants learned to surface and question their own assumptions as they listened to complex personal histories. James and Janice find to their surprise that during the personal experience panel, they each shared experiences they had never before told anyone, including their own families. As Janice says poignantly, participants were amazed to find themselves discussing difficult topics, sometimes for the first time in their lives:

I think for me it was the first time that someone told me "Speak about education and race together, collectively, and don't try to mince words or have a detour in

the conversation to make it about socioeconomic status or gender,” but to talk about race and education and how the two go hand in hand.

Listening activities created opportunity for participants to consider their own experiences in light of the stories of others. Spending significant time debriefing the content and the process of each protocol engagement allowed each TFEE participant to make personal connections and to share how the content related to their local work or how a protocol might be adapted for use in their individual professional environments. During these debriefing sessions, Chloe, Jordan, and Ciara were able to speak as knowledgeable secondary classroom teachers while Sadie and James were equally encouraged to speak from the perspectives of university educators. As young men who had only recently completed teacher education courses and who were working as bilingual paraprofessionals, Adam’s and Carlos’ contributions were received with the same respect and appreciation as those of Diana who was teaching graduate courses for prospective principals. Janice was able to surface her uncertainties as she was transitioning from a high school classroom to a short-term teaching position at a university. Each participant was encouraged and given time to seek relevant connections between the TFEE seminar content and his/her personal and professional lives.

The TFEE facilitators exhibited warmth, patience and flexibility. TFEE participants were deeply touched that control of each day’s agenda was proposed first by the facilitators, and then co-negotiated by the group in order to ensure that the content and the engagements met the needs of the unique group of participants, rather than rigidly moving the group through a scripted, predetermined set of activities. This flexibility inspired the TFEE participants to reconsider the way that they plan for their own students. As Jordan indicates, from this modeling she learned to

relax a bit and notice when her students were not ready to move on or when they wanted to go deeper into something than she anticipated.

Contextual recognition is a function of what the TFEE facilitators and participants call “inside work” and “outside work.” Inside work is the sort of personal, reflective, thoughtful engagement TFEE participants experienced during the seminar. Inside work permits the participant to become aware of, question, and deal with assumptions, biases, preconceived notions, and negative experiences that might impede an educator from fully recognizing the complexity of the social, political, economic, racial, cultural, and linguistic identities students bring into the classroom. Inside work prepares an educator for the outside work, or the action that aligns with the educator’s stated commitments.

Ciara, as a black Jamaican woman, for example, comes to the conclusion that being of the same race as some of her students does not automatically mean that she understands what it is like for her African American students or that she relates well with them. Having her own Jamaican history and identity means she has sometimes struggled to understand contextualized behaviors, beliefs and attitudes of her students. Naming this new realization allowed Ciara to change the way she reacted to and offered support to students who had previously tested her patience:

I have become really acutely aware of what other people are doing and of Discourse I. I have just become more conscious of that, and how I have shifted [my thinking]. Because I think that whole idea of the guy who has 62 referrals-I want to watch out for him. Not in a sense of trying to be mean to him, but of good teaching, in the sense of being aware of students who need that micro

managing. And I still am aware of that kid with the long list of referrals, but it's a shift in how I decide to approach that.

This outside work was demonstrated both in her spoken commitments to the local TFEE group and in her teaching decisions. TFEE participants report being able to practice contextual recognition with their students because they experienced the impact and valued of being contextually recognized, both during the TFEE seminar and in the local TFEE group of urban educators who continued to meet after the seminar concluded.

**Transformative Recognition.** Rodriguez (1977) echoes Lisa Delpit's (1995) challenge to educators by stating that "transformative recognition encourages institutions and educators to constantly interrogate the purposes and goals of their policies, processes, and practices. That is, education for the purposes of what?" (p.12). The result of failing to ask this question, as Rodriguez sees it, is that minority students in urban schools are often subjected to test-prep instruction when in fact, "passing a statewide standardized test is just one necessary hoop to jump through but means very little in determining one's preparation for college or for life" (p.23). Rodriguez claims that ignoring issues of purpose is "directly associated with student failure" and states that "marginalized students are most likely to rely on schooling as the one possible experience that may help them escape from poverty and envision a promising future"

(p.23). Within transformative recognition, educators take on the Freirian approach of:

reading the word and reading the world...[which] means that Latina/o youth must be literate beyond any high-stakes test, must be academically competitive to excel in challenging situations, and must be equipped with the critical skills to connect their realities with the larger influences of school, community, and society for self-determination. (p.23)

Rodriguez' transformative recognition weaves together Freire's (1971) notion of *praxis* with bell hooks' (1994) insistence on the teaching of critical thinking skills, recognition of connections, and relations of power as described in *Teaching to Transgress*. Rodriguez believes this weaving produces "educators [who] understand that factors such as relationships, curriculum, social context and pedagogy are vital to Latina/o student engagement and achievement in school" (p.22).

In his Framework, Rodriguez originally identified this element as *transformational recognition* and described the characteristics of the element as teaching for social and political change by engaging marginalized students in questioning, challenging and changing systemic inequities through a Freirian approach of "reading the word and reading the world" (Freire, 1971). The FPREE model maintains this basic definition, but renames it *social justice recognition* in order to reserve the term transformational for the center space of the FPREE and to hopefully more accurately address the new guiding question: To what end do we teach?

TFEE seminar participants do not explicitly use the term *praxis*, but they do identify moving from the reflection of the TFEE seminar to taking action for the sake of addressing and interrupting systemic inequities in their local professional settings. TFEE participants value having the time to "speak a true word," (Freire, 1971, p. 87) and for reflection, having spent significant time in dialogue together during the seminar, but they also make clear that they take seriously the Action Plans each developed at the end of the seminar. TFEE participants reported on their own progress and sometimes wondered aloud how others were doing. In the months following the seminar, Adam and Carlos write strikingly similar Action Plans and support one another in their work with English language learners. This support proved difficult to provide, but became all the more necessary as Adam's teaching load increased dramatically and Carlos

unexpectedly took on a class sponsorship position that allowed him to advocate for Latina/o students with white students while trying to see student conflicts from multiple perspectives—new learning he encountered during the TFEE seminar.

Sadie quickly found herself embroiled in a student discipline controversy at her college and simultaneously began to see fissures in the stated culture of trust and equity there. To her great delight, Sadie tried some TFEE protocols, opening rituals, and co-negotiated agendas with a small group of racial minority female students on campus and discovered the young women thrived and were empowered by this approach. Diana collaborated with Sandra, one of the facilitators, to introduce a new protocol designed to address equity dilemmas in schools with a group of future principals. James went back to his small college armed with approaches and clarity of thinking about his professional dilemma and dealt successfully with an issue that had been so stressful for months that he worried he might have to leave the college. James also began using TFEE protocols with the multicultural team at his college and found this increased engagement at the meetings.

The local TFEE group brought their Action Plans to their first meeting to make themselves accountable to one another. Ciara and Chloe indicated that they were counting on the local TFEE group to help them stay true to their equity commitments. Janice stated aloud her hope that the local TFEE group would “spread our wings” and share their learning with other educators, which in fact they were able to do at two significant events with educators within less than one year of the TFEE seminar. Jordan continued to wrestle with her own whiteness and began to notice white privilege all around her at school where it had previously been invisible to her. She began to question and challenge discipline procedures and policies that unfairly penalized students of color.



**Pedagogical Recognition.** Pedagogical recognition, according to Rodriguez, “considers the degree to which the pedagogical processes of schooling reflect the realities of Latina/o youth” (p.20). If curricular recognition examines the *what* of school, pedagogical recognition tells *how* the curriculum is enacted. Understanding how to teach minority students must go well beyond merely trying on the latest comprehension strategy fetish to explore the realities of students’ lives by becoming transformative mentors who daily engage in “identifying, analyzing, deconstructing, and seeking “codes of power” (Delpit, 1995), that “shape the nature of schools...and use classrooms and schools as social spaces of resistance, identity formation, and hope” (Rodriguez L. F., 2012, p. 20).

As identified similarly in curricular recognition, pedagogical recognition also challenges traditional deficit understandings of Latina/o youth engagement in school and the frequently unexamined relations of power that educators generally have *over* students that often result in student disengagement. Here Rodriguez cites as an example the power *with* inherent in negotiating with a group of students a request to leave the focus group early. Because Rodriguez trusted the group to share power with him, the students ultimately decided that allowing the student to leave early would be “counterproductive to the goal” of the group’s project. Because the decision was negotiated, rather than imposed, students stayed engaged. Rodriguez concludes that minority students want educators who mentor, who welcome critical perspectives, “who advocate for students, and...forge opportunities for students to advocate for themselves” (p.20). Indeed, during this “test-centered” and “post-NCLB” time in urban schools, Rodriguez claims that minority students in urban schools “are among the most in need of inspiring, motivating, and revolutionary pedagogies” (p.22).

Rodriguez' Framework of Recognition provides a useful way to categorize the experiences of the TFEE participants and to examine the fresh contributions their experiences make to the Framework in light of Rodriguez' invitation to "interrogate the (in)effectiveness of institutional and classroom-level practices" (2012, p. 2) for urban teachers and to "examine the extent to which recognition is a practice and pedagogy as much as it is a theoretical construct to be used for dialogue and analysis" (p. 5). As Rodriguez states, the Framework provides "a blend of merging a working framework with practice that is political, pedagogical and practical...[which] advocates both interpersonal and relational change as much as structural and cultural change at the policy and institutional levels" (p. 27). This blending within Rodriguez's Framework provides theory, a mental construct, and perspectives from which to view and make meaning of the experiences of the TFEE participants.

Rodriguez' definition of pedagogical recognition requires teachers to carefully and intentionally select specific teaching and learning processes which meet the needs of the particular students in each class while engaging the students in naming, examining, challenging and reconstructing the existing relations of power located within and outside the classroom, beginning first with the power teachers traditionally hold *over* students. As Rodriguez indicates in his research with student focus groups, being willing to relinquish and renegotiate some of his power with students resulted in increased student engagement and a stronger sense of shared ownership of the student focus group's project.

TFEE participants were invited to co-negotiate each day's agenda, rather than merely submitting passively to a pre-determined agenda imposed by the facilitators. In addition, the creation of group agreements and regular check-ins of those agreements inspired TFEE participants to make changes in the ways that they managed their classrooms. Chloe and Jordan

each spent time with each class section developing unique sets of agreements and found this improved student engagement and behavior, even with the high percentages of special needs students both have in their classrooms. Chloe's middle school students created and personalized agreement posters and took turns leading their class in agreement reviews each day. Chloe reported that these agreement reviews changed the ways that students engaged with one another and were so important that students were quick to interrupt if they felt Chloe had forgotten to ask for the agreement review.

Janice, who was just beginning a short-term instructional position in a teachers' college, reported that she started her new college class meetings with the kinds of opening rituals she learned at the TFEE; her early success led her to wonder what several years of these practices might produce in a school setting. Janice's TFEE experience prepared her to support white preservice teachers as they visited urban schools very different from their own high schools. Ciara stopped sending a couple of students out to the dean and started sitting down with them quietly to seek to understand how she might make pedagogical adjustments that would help these students stay out of trouble and produce more art.

Jordan was experimenting with interrupting her students' preconceived notion of the teacher as the source of correct answers by leading her students into discussions in which she was not "looking for one right answer." Jordan recognized that her students were justifiably suspicious at first since they viewed her as "a representative of the system, and they have learned [how] the system works."

*The New Element, Collegial Recognition: How do we stay engaged?* Collegial recognition is the FPREE's new contribution to the original Framework and emerges from the great value TFEE seminar participants place on collegial relationships and engagements. TFEE

participants repeatedly and emphatically state that the relationships built during the TFEE seminar made it possible to take risks and to stay engaged in difficult, often painful seminar work. In the months following the TFEE seminar, participants realized that these professional relationships were both a comfort and an inspiration across time and distance, even for those like Diana and James who were isolated by geographical distance from all the others. The refrain “I am not alone; I have allies out there” emerged as an important outcome during the Round 2 interviews and was a significant factor in the decision of the local TFEE group’s decision to continue meeting in the months following the conclusion of the TFEE seminar.

As a result of the collegial community experienced during the TFEE seminar, TFEE participants report noticing and reaching out to colleagues and allies in their individual professional settings. Local TFEE group members created collegial community for themselves outside of their teaching contexts and claim that their collegial interdependence, reclaiming time to think, and seeing one another as a source of strength are necessary for them to be able to take action in their individual settings.

TFEE participants identify trust as a key component that made it possible for them to be vulnerable and take risks with one another. Speaking to one another truthfully about their beliefs, practices, struggles and professional dilemmas in a safe, comfortable setting is what participants called “getting real.” Participants felt their ability during the TFEE seminar to get real with one another was unusual. The trust and vulnerability, along with their shared equity commitments produced the sense that even for those who were hundreds of miles away from the nearest TFEE colleague, they were not alone, but had real “allies out there.” The local TFEE group valued this collegiality so much they continued to meet long after the conclusion of the TFEE seminar.

The collegiality of the seminar participants inspired TFEE participants to notice that there were people in their individual local settings who were suddenly visible and available as allies where previously it had seemed there were none. Jordan indicated she discovered a new ally “right across the hall” and that she was starting to identify potential “quiet people” from her faculty she felt might be interested in advocacy work with her.

### **TFEE Contributions to the Framework: A Critical Feminist Critique**

It is clear that Rodriguez’s Framework emerges from a critical research method in the sense that it was developed from sustained, authentic engagements in urban schools with marginalized students and that the Framework questions, challenges, and makes visible destructive systems and structures within schools and classrooms that often are ignored to the peril of marginalized students. Rodriguez’s approach honors and privileges the voices of the marginalized students and goes a long way toward answering Lather’s question: “What work do we want inquiry to do?” (2007, p. 39).

However, as it stands in its original form, the Framework can only point toward the conditions the students indicated are necessary for equitable achievement of marginalized students; it cannot explain how those conditions are created and maintained by teachers over time. The Framework leaves unanswered the question of how practicing teachers take on conscious, critical teaching identities which position and empower them to attend to the elements of the Framework. And perhaps even more importantly, once introduced to the teaching philosophies and approaches inherent in the Framework, how will teachers maintain this critical stance rather than defaulting back to safer, easier stances?

Rodriguez’ version of the Framework provides a strong conceptual beginning, but because the source of its analytical focus is students of color, it cannot provide guidance on

addressing the needs of their teachers or explain how practicing teachers could shift their philosophies and practices away from maintaining the status quo and toward teaching for educational equity. Rodriguez' Framework treats teachers as isolated individuals who might choose to strive toward the Framework, but makes no mention of the presence of colleagues down the hall or of the fact that teachers work as members of a specific building faculty and as members of a networks within a broader collective of educators. Rodriguez' Framework therefore unintentionally creates the false notion that teachers can act alone within their classrooms to interrupt systemic inequities.

This study sheds light on the importance of collaborative, collegial relationships, not only because of the professed critical feminist research commitments which highly value collaboration and community, but more importantly, because the four urban TFEE study group participants identify the creation and maintenance of collegial relationships as an essential, necessary condition within which educators can examine their professional identities and practices. It is clear from the data within this study that without collegial support, transformation of teacher practices for educational equity cannot be sustained.

The original Rodriguez Framework graphic currently is represented by the five forms of recognition arranged in a circular fashion, which leaves an empty place in the center occupied only by the title. Rodriguez does not name this space, nor does his use of the graphic suggest that there is any order or cycle present, just five kinds of recognition Latina/o students need from educators in order to achieve full success in school. However, this currently empty space can be seen alternatively as a *space* (physical, conceptual, or imaginary space; in the present, the past, or across time and geographical distance by some communication medium) that is created when a group of educators attend to each element the Framework in their practice. In addition, analysis

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emerging from this study contributes a new element, *collegial recognition*, to address a gap in the original Framework.

Finally, while Rodriguez applied the label *transformative recognition* to just one component of the Framework, here it has been renamed as *social justice recognition* because we theorize that transformation is what takes place within the center space created only when all the other elements are in place, are enacted, embraced and honored by educators, first as learners and then as professional educators who re-create these conditions in their professional contexts. The result of these contributions is the new Professional Framework of Recognition for Educational Equity (FPREE). Although much of Rodriguez' original language, thinking and influence are still useful, present, and visible throughout the FPREE, this new version represents and includes the perspectives of TFEE participants gleaned from the analysis of their TFEE experiences. A graphic representation of the FPREE is included here:

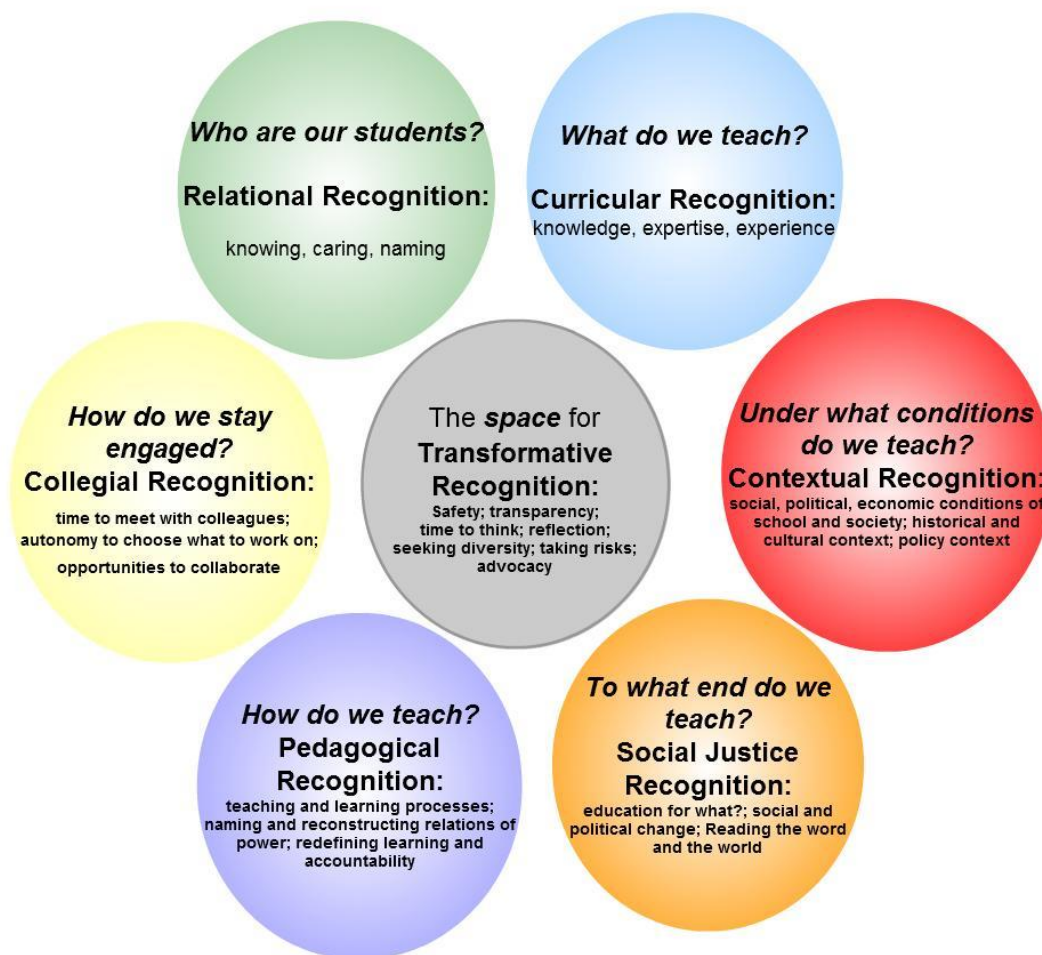


Figure 3 Author 1's' Framework of Professional Recognition for Educational Equity (FPREE)



The FPREE graphic is not meant to be seen as a rigid, orderly cycle in which one enters through a specific “gateway” aspect and then moves along a predictable path through a series of elements; the FPREE is instead intended to make visible the multiple aspects that must simultaneously be in place and attended to by educators seeking to interrupt and eliminate systemic inequities for marginalized students.

### **Implications for Future Research**

We have been astounded and gratified by the excitement and willingness of TFEE participants to extend their engagement over time. In our experience, many educators are hungry for thoughtful, rigorous, and dialogic opportunities for discussion, for feedback and for coaching, but how these relationships are established and maintained is critical to the success of the sustained engagement. As former K-12 educators ourselves, we have experienced hundreds of hours of professional development, most of which has had minimal impact upon us partly because there is seldom opportunity built into the PD for experimentation, reflection, and feedback after the PD seminar has concluded. Most of the time, at the end of the seminar, the hired professional leaves town and that is the last the local educators ever see of the facilitator. Typically PD participants are only offered a Likert survey in which they evaluate the performance of the seminar facilitator.

In this study, the recurring presence of a researcher provided inadvertent opportunities for TFEE participants to reflect on the impact of the survey on their practice. In addition, though all of the TFEE participants sincerely intended to stay connected and to continue their engagements with one another, the reality is that this probably only happened because Author 1 continued to contact them for interviews. And, although they see the value and the necessity of continuing to

meet together, the local TFEE group of four urban educators would probably have died a natural death after one or two meetings were it not for Author 1's presence as a researcher.

The TFEE seminar participants provide rich insights into their experience of a race-based equity seminar for educators. This group of nine strangers graciously and enthusiastically permitted access to their thoughts, feelings, professional decisions and their hopes. At the end of each interview session, , most TFEE participants expressed thanks for the time to think and to process aloud what the experience meant to them with another person who shared the TFEE experience. Understanding the follow-up interviews as a reflective opportunity for participants to reconnect to the seminar was a powerful, but unexpected outcome. As James says, "This project, this [dissertation] research that you are doing, for me is beneficial because it is forcing me to be reflective. So I am happy to...unpack this stuff with you and keep it fresh on my mind." Participants stated repeatedly and in various ways that they wanted to continue thinking about and working on the ideas, struggles, and pedagogical practices they experienced during the seminar; they saw the research project as an opportunity to stop their work momentarily and process the TFEE experience dialogically.

It seems likely that knowing they would be contacted as part of the research project also helped the participants keep the action plan promises they each made to themselves at the end of the TFEE seminar. If not for the regular communication with Author 1 for interviews in the months following the seminar, it is not clear what additional activities, if any, would have happened after the seminar for the five participants who did not engage with the local TFEE group. As is common when a group of people shares an intense experience together, the participants promised to stay in touch, but by and large most returned to their homes and their practices without maintaining any communication. With the exception of the local TFEE group

who communicated and met regularly, the other five participants expressed affection and concern for the others and hoped they were well, but this concern did not result in phone calls or emails between them. Of the five, only James and Diana reported that they had maintained communication with one of the three seminar facilitators.

We do not state these conclusions to minimize in any way the contributions of each TFEE participant; instead we hope to point to the power of one person's intentionality and availability to maintain communication with participants for an extended time following PD. Like a suspect in a TV crime drama, Author 1 had motive and opportunity to follow up with the participants. We theorize that any PD developed for educators and that purports to produce transformative change should build in this follow up engagement expectation with the facilitator from the outset. Additional study would shed light and would deepen understandings about how this extension is best developed, whether it is most effective when provided by "outsiders" who can be removed from local politics and issues, or whether a local "insider" who shares commitments, deep historical understandings, and shared language is best positioned to provide extension opportunities to participants. This follow-up would also provide rich feedback to the PD facilitators about how educators are using their PD experience over time and would permit facilitators to fine-tune or make significant adjustments where necessary, providing facilitators a natural opportunity to model Relational and Contextual recognition for participants.

Author 1's's membership in the TFEE group also granted her access, friendship, and shared language. It is clear that this insider access resulted in richer, deeper insights as TFEE participants pushed themselves into reflection, reflexivity and often painful honesty in their interviews; quite simply, participants told Author 1 things they would never have told a stranger unfamiliar with the seminar. Future research exploring the impact of transparently embedding a

researcher who will follow up with participants after the experience is likely to reveal additional powerful the implications inherent in this approach.

## **Conclusion**

Too often educators are subjected to PD that fails to create authentic learning conditions while simultaneously perpetuating its own version of poor pedagogy. Is it any wonder that inauthentic and externally imposed PD is frequently ignored, dreaded, or poorly adapted for use by participants? By comparison, the FPREE—or, as we say, putting the Framework to work—offers new understandings under conditions that recognize the unique complexities inherent in each school and classroom. If the goal is for teachers to transform their practice in order to interrupt inequitable outcomes for urban students, PD facilitators first need to create transformative conditions in which urban teachers can safely and joyfully engage as learners. Teachers cannot re-create conditions in their classrooms that they have not yet experienced.

The TFEE participants' stories offer powerful and compelling alternatives to consider for those who hope to interrupt and transform systemic inequities for marginalized students through sustained professional development. The TFEE, with its vibrant emphasis on Collegial Recognition brings into focus the need for educators to have time and opportunity to engage in transformative experiences like those of the TFEE seminar so that, after having experienced the FPREE for themselves as learners, they are then able to translate the six FPREE elements to their schools and to their classrooms in a sustainable approach.

Janice's statement in the epigraph is indicative both of educators' need and desire for opportunities that move beyond traditional PD, beyond courageous conversations, and beyond the framework of recognition (Rodriguez L. F., 2012) into the race-based conversations and learning possible in the transformative space created by the new FPREE. Urban educators

committed to a FPREE-shaped practice within the support of a collegial, collaborative and critical friendship community indeed teach toward educational equity for all students.

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