

2016

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Recommended Citation

Fox, Brandon L. (2016) "Negotiating the Baptist Influence in East Texas: Examining 'Multiple Reflections' to Disrupt the Local Sociopolitical Stage," *The Journal of Faith, Education, and Community*. Vol. 1 : Iss. 2 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jfec/vol1/iss2/3>

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Negotiating the Baptist Influence in East Texas:

Examining 'Multiple Reflections' to Disrupt the Local Sociopolitical Stage

[Telephone ringing] //////////////

[Momma answers] Hello.

[Pawpaw greets] Good morning Hun. Is the grandson awake?

[Momma responds] Just a minute and I'll get him.

[Me] Hey Pawpaw!

[Pawpaw greets] Good morning grandson. Granny and I will be there in a few minutes.

Make sure you are ready for church.

Welcome to the process of my Sunday mornings from early childhood through my teenage years. There were slight modifications; however, my grandparents were certain that I would be raised the "right way" in the local Baptist church. Throughout most of my life, we attended rural Missionary Baptist churches, but on occasion we would attend other categorizations of Baptist churches with reservation. If you notice from the opening dialogue, my grandfather did not ask if I was going to church. He simply stated for me to be ready for them to pick me up. It was a lot easier to *get out of* going to school than to *get out of* going to church.

As I reflect on who I am, my positionality, I am always connected to and through the influence of my experiences in spaces of organized religion. As I attempt to provide an overview of my socialized identity, I ask that you take into consideration the complexity of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality is a product from the way that multiple aspects of social interactions occur between individuals and social groups. When I look into a mirror, I notice presumptions of White skin, short brown hair, blue eyes, medium height,

ableness (depending on context), and maleness. In singularity, each component of the visual represents socially constructed *borders* that provide access and limitations to power, privilege, and experience (Slattery, 2013). In complexity, the collected components create a nuanced interaction in time and space. Reflecting on socialized identity, I am encouraged to reflect beyond the imagery of the mirror to examine the components that influence the thinking of this image. The remainder of this autoethnography is to further examine the socialized space that I have experienced consciousness. For the remainder of this section, I provide an overview of the primary communities that I constructed consciousness followed by a brief overview of the central tenets of the Missionary Baptist churches that I have attended. In the next section, I include an overview of the conceptual lens that I challenge myself to apply to my multiple reflections. Then I provide a methodological section describing the approach to autoethnography for this paper. I follow with a section that includes ‘multiple reflections’ and close out with a discussion about disrupting the local sociopolitical stage.

Contextualizing Communities

I have primarily lived in four different communities to date, living in each community for a minimum of two years. For the purpose of this paper, I primarily focus on experiences within these communities. Please take the use of tense into consideration when reading this section. Also, a particular pseudonym is used for each community described. The first community is identified as Vine located in what is often termed Deep East Texas. The second community is Pine Lake on the border of Deep East Texas and the northern part of Southeast Texas. The third community is Byrd located in Southeast Texas. The fourth and final community is Dochess located in the heart of Deep East Texas. I attempt to provide a sketch of these communities here so that there is a connection in the ‘multiple reflections’ below.

Vine. The context that I was raised in through my early schooling years was primarily small, rural, and impoverished. The closest convenience store was about ten miles away, the closest grocery store was about 20 miles away, and the closest Wal-Mart or shopping mall was about 45 miles away. Vine community shares two commonalities with most other communities in East Texas: a Missionary Baptist church and limited access to industry. A few communities may have a Pentecostal or Methodist church: however, these are rare, and those who attend those churches are often *othered*. I chose Vine as the primary point of reference, but I also spent time in neighboring sister communities of Wood and Pin. Each community is very small, and the intersections of friends and family through these communities are common. While these communities are all in the same county, a distinction is schooling. Some members from these communities attend a small school that includes a population of mostly White students, while others experienced a larger school that included a population of mostly students of color. I started school in the district for mostly White students, but during the first grade I began attending the school with mostly students of color.

Pine Lake. Following my sixth grade year, my family was adamant to enroll me in a school district that was “better.” My mother had graduated from Pine Lake ISD, and my dad graduated from Hill ISD, both in Enibas county. Pine Lake was perceived to be the strongest rural school in the area. Pine Lake was a community of about 882 people and included a grocery store, several convenience stores, industry, youth sports leagues, and a few small restaurants. The community and school were primarily White with a few students identified as Black and/or African American. Most people of color lived *on the hill* or *across the tracks*. I graduated from Pine Lake with 37 students (four students of color). Pine Lake is approximately 35 miles from Byrd.

Byrd. Byrd was our “go-to” place while living in Pine Lake. It was larger and housed a Wal-Mart, movie theatre, and a larger selection of restaurants. After graduating from college with my undergraduate degree, I moved to the Byrd area with my fiancé to teach seventh grade mathematics at Byrd Junior High. Byrd is well known as a town of intense tension across racial identities. Another small community outside of Byrd is Kirby where my fiancé was a teacher and coach. Byrd County, a very impoverished locale, is very segregated and is primarily White and Black with an emerging Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Chicano/Chicana American population. Industry is small, but larger than other local areas. Byrd ISD has higher percentages of students of color while the surrounding districts have higher percentages of White students. While living in Byrd, I also taught mathematics in a smaller community about fifteen miles from Byrd that catered primarily to White students.

Doches. I was born in Doches in 1982, lived in Doches from 2000-2005 while attending the local university, and returned to teach in Doches ISD and to work on my graduate degree in 2007. We have lived in Doches since 2007 with the exception of a one-year excursion to the Midwest. Doches is known as the oldest town in Texas and was recently labeled as the number eight poorest city in the United States according to an outside analysis of the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau’s annual American Community Survey. Doches is a rural East Texas town of just over 30,000 people and is intensely segregated just as the aforementioned communities. Nacogdoches ISD has a student population that is approximately 23% White or European American, 44% Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Chicano/Chicana American, 29% Black or African American, 3% Asian American, and 1% multi-racial. Within a 25-mile radius, there are ten small independent school districts that are primarily enrolled by White students and numerous elementary grades, private Christian schools.

Missionary Baptist Tenets

Describing the tenets of Baptist churches in East Texas is challenging and any interpretation below is based on my experiences within this space. There are various branches and associations as well as many that are known as independents. Often times in East Texas we refer to Baptist as a general term. Missionary Baptist churches are typically located in communities and Baptist churches are often located closer to towns. Growing up in Missionary Baptist Churches, we referred to other Baptist churches as sister churches whether they were Missionary Baptist, Southern Baptists, or other strands of Baptist churches. With this identity, the sister churches are typically *of our world*. *Of our world* is the idea of *separation* from a dualistic sense of those who share similarities (consciousness, sub-consciousness: philosophy, physically, and socially). The characteristics representing *of our world* are often supported by scriptures and can be used in various ways. It is believed that Baptists are the only true lineage of faith of the one true God (Stark, 2001).

Our one true God, created man in perfect form and man created his destiny by being weak in a moment of seduction. Beginning with the original sin, each person following is suppressed and can only experience true happiness by the *grace of God through salvation*. *Salvation* is wholly by grace and occurs within an authentic moment between person and God. A person must seek the Holy Spirit, repent, and know without a doubt that the Holy Spirit has forgiven them and saved them. To reach the *promise land*, a person must have accepted Christ as their personal savior and must have received forgiveness from God. A person may or may not be baptized in order to reach Heaven. Ultimately, we are on the pathway to judgment day. We believe that the world is coming to an end and there will be a day of judgment where some will rejoice in the *heavenly promise land* while others will burn in Hell for eternity.

Following closely with *separation* is the idea of being a *missionary*. Once saved it is expected to share the word of God with all others, especially non-believers and sinners. It is only supported to enter the spaces of sin and sinners in the light of testimony and missionary work. When one enters this space they are expected to share God's *literal word* through the Christian Bible. Growing up, the only acceptable exposure to Christian Bibles were the King James Version and with some limitations to the New King James Version. Literal and textual meanings were important and it was not embraced to engage in philosophical explorations beyond the pre-determined interpretations of literal meaning. Within this frame, it is understood to not ask why because it is the Word of the Father.

Governance of the church shall be by the *local* congregation and by majority vote of the congregation. Primary leaders are expected to be male and consist of the pastor/minister and the deacons of the church. Women are expected to serve in the necessary roles of preparing food, aesthetics, and music. Males are expected to serve in the necessary roles of business, construction, property maintenance, and verbal prayer. On rare occasion, a female member of the congregation may be called upon to pray. *Gendered expectations* are clear and operate in a binary.

Conceptual Framework

Throughout this paper, I use multiple frames of reference to articulate my perspective as well as to provide critiques to the *multiple reflections* (Ronai, 1995). Multiple reflections are used to provide a layered account of events and are an attempt to describe consciousness from a current perspective that is nuanced. I intentionally utilize, with caution and consideration, frames theorized by marginalized persons to apply a critique to specific events of my consciousness. Due to my positionality, I believe that it is important to be careful to not co-opt the frameworks

employed, yet to use the frameworks as a method to describe and critique a reality of *differential consciousness* (Sandoval, 1991). While recognizing the complexity of social identity and location, I apply both the *borderlands framework* (Anzaldúa, 2012) and *conscientization* (Freire, 1970) as the process to *naming* (Freire, 1970) the construction of borders.

Anzaldúa's (2012) use of the *border* metaphor provides a pathway to identify social crossings as well as barriers. Anzaldúa utilized forms of autoethnography to establish a powerful critique, *borderlands theory*, to exam problematic and oppressive *borders* (Anzaldúa, 2012). *Borderlands theory* provides a method of deconstructing scenarios to identify border crossings "between geopolitical boundaries, sexual transgressions, social dislocations, and the crossings necessary to exist in multiple linguistic and cultural contexts" (p. 6).

Freire (1970) provides a framework for developing a critical consciousness through a continuous state of reflection and action known as *conscientization*. *Conscientization* can be the key to developing a lens and process for identifying oppressive forces through *naming* the world in which we experience. The ability to identify, reflect, and actively engage can create space for a person to construct reality beyond the confines of dominant ideology. Applying the *borderlands framework* and *conscientization* as a process of *naming*, I attempt to enter the *Third space of enunciations* (Bahabha, 1994) to engage in the "activity of weaving 'between and among' oppositional ideologies" (Perez, 1999) to disrupt the dominant forces within the local sociopolitical environment (Conquergood, 2002).

Methodology

For this qualitative exploration, I use critical autoethnography (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014) to engage in a critically reflexive dialogue of consciousness. Critical autoethnography provides space for conversations and performance toward radical social transformation through dialogue,

reflection, narratives, emotion, and engaged embodiment (Jones, 2005). The following sections will include multiple reflections of past experiences to create a *layered account* (Ronai, 1995). Ronai describes a layered account as “a postmodern ethnographic reporting technique that embodies a theory of consciousness and a method of reporting...handing the readers layers of experience so they may fill in the spaces and construct an interpretation of the writer’s narrative” (p. 396). In the next section, I provide an examination of consciousness through critical autoethnographic episodes.

Multiple Reflections

When reviewing the following multiple reflections, please notice that I provide a conscious recall followed by a narrative of conscious struggle. Following the ‘multiple reflections’ I engage in an interpretation based on my positionality, social context, and the frameworks described in a previous section. You will notice sub-headings between scenes and page breaks defined by three *** to enhance interpretation. While these scenes are only a snapshot of particular moments of socialization and therefore are only a glimpse into my socialization. However, these scenes are specifically chosen to draw attention to nuanced intersections of identity and social expectations in a rural Southern place.

Separation: Gender and Race

Scene 1. [Telephone ringing] //////////////

[Momma answers] Hello.

[Pawpaw greets] Good morning Hun. Is the Grandson awake?

[Momma responds] Just a minute and I’ll get him.

[Me] Hey, Pawpaw!

[Pawpaw greets] Good morning Grandson. Granny and I will be there in a few minutes.
Make sure you are ready for church.

Narrative: We arrive at the only community church in Vine. It is a bright and sunny day, and there is not a Dallas Cowboys football game so church may go well beyond noon. There seems to be a good number of people here today. We are just in time for me to be the perfect little six-year old gentlemen. I will be able to hold the door open for everyone to enter. Sunday school is out and it is time for general service. I am holding the door open; the women have entered and now the men have. It is time to get comfortable. My beautiful grandmother is playing the piano today and as always there is a male song leader. Three songs later and now is time for the call for specials. There are two today. *Amazing Grace* we sing. The offering plate is circulating through the efforts of male ushers. There were two solo performances for specials. Now it is time for the preacher to take the pulpit. I wonder what he is going to preach about today? He's probably going to tell us that if we don't get our life right with God that we are going to spend eternity in Hell. I bet it's hot there. I wonder if I can provide water to some of the people suffering in Hell. I bet they are thirsty. I bet they didn't mean to be bad. The preacher is now in the pulpit and I am not paying close enough attention for my grandfather. I hope he doesn't take me out and spank me today for not being still and attentive. The preacher has been preaching for what seems like forever, but it is only 11:38 am. Wow, he sweats a lot. I think he is going to need more water. I wonder if he knows that he yells a lot? The door in the back of the church opens and slams closed. The preacher silences. Everyone turns to see who opened the door because you never get up and leave when the preacher is preaching. Wow, someone was really late to church today. I have never seen him here amongst our congregation of 40 something people. Why is everyone staring at him? Why hasn't the preacher started back preaching yet? Is there something wrong

with this person? [Tick tock. Tick tock.] Everyone still staring and it has been what seems like five minutes. The person that arrived late to church gets up with a look of fear on his face. What is he going to do? Everyone is still silenced. No one has said anything for some time now. He turns and walks from the back pew, opens the door, and exits the building. Everyone turns to the preacher and the preacher wipes his forehead. He goes back to his sermon without any acknowledgement of what had just occurred. I attempted to ask my grandfather what had happened and he hushed me. It must be another one of those things that we don't talk about. After the sermon, I was excited that I made it through church without getting in trouble. Everyone congregated outside to see who was going to be the lucky ones to take the preacher and his wife to dinner at the closest restaurant 20 miles away. We are the lucky ones.

Separation: Race and/or Ethnicity

Scene 2. [Momma] How was your day at school?

[Me] It was good, Momma. Did you fix me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich?

[Momma] It's on the table with a glass of chocolate milk.

[Me] Thanks Momma! You are the best! Can a friend come and stay the night with me this weekend? Momma, please!

[Momma] I don't know we will see. Who are you planning to invite over?

[Me] Justin.

[Momma] I don't think this weekend is a good weekend.

[Me] When then Momma?

[Momma] I don't know. I'll let you know.

Narrative: By now, I am seven years old and attending school in San Augustine. Maybe today will be different. I must ask. By now, I am eight years old. Maybe today will be different. I must ask. By now, I am nine years old. Maybe today will be different. I must ask. By now, I am ten years old. Maybe today will be different. I must ask. By now, I am eleven years old. Maybe today will be different. I must ask. Today was different. No, I was not told that Justin could come and stay. Instead I was told:

[Daddy] Come here, Son. I need to tell you something.

[Me] Ok Daddy, what it be?

[Daddy] We will be moving to Pine Lake and you will be attending Pine Lake ISD.

[Me] But why, Daddy?

[Daddy] Just because I said so. You will receive a better education there. You will make new and better friends and you will get a better education.

Separation: Diverse Home Environments

Scene 3. [Me] Hey, Baby Girl! How you doin'?

[Fiancé] Hey, Baby (tears starting to pour).

[Me] What's going on? I never see you upset like this.

[Fiancé] I think I may be about to lose my job.

[Me] Why? Did something happen?

[Fiancé] I don't know. I think it is because we are living together.

Narrative: How can that be? We have only been staying together for a couple of weeks. I just graduated, and I am now teaching in Byrd. You have been teaching in Kirby for over a year now and haven't had any complaints and all of your evaluations have been exceptional. I don't

understand why good Christian people would bring you into their office and tell you that you need to be a better person and that you are an important role model in the community if you haven't done anything wrong. I know that Granny and Pawpaw don't want us staying together out of wedlock, but this is all that we can afford right now. Do you think that they know we are staying together? I leave before daylight and never get in before late at night. Did they tell you what you have done to not be a good person? Did they give any insight to how you are not an exceptional role model?

[Fiancé] They never said what I have done. Just yelled at me telling me that I have to act better and be a better role model and that they can't have teachers here who are not.

[Me] Baby, I am sorry that they did this. I don't understand. Your principal is a Baptist preacher and your assistant principal is a deacon at the same church. These are good God-fearing Christian people. They are like us. I know there can be judgment of females for not maintaining purity and for living together outside of wedlock. Do you think this is it?

[Fiancé] I don't know, but I want to move out of sight and out of mind. I thought that maybe if we went to their church that may help, but I think we need to find a new home.

[Me] Ok.

Narrative: Now we have relocated outside of town, out of sight, out of mind. Fiancé's evaluation is coming up. I am glad that she had an exceptional evaluation. I guess that everything is ok now. I wonder what the difference is? The only thing that has changed is our place of living. I think we should move to Doches. We found a house across from the high school that we love. Let's buy! Bought. Moved in. Let's get married in the back yard by the pool. Planned. June 3, 2007. It's only the second week of May, our first weekend in our new home. Let's go to the church today that is block from our front door. Ok, this looks just like all of the other Baptist churches in

the area. Feels comfortable. Everyone is so nice and each person seems so eager to get to know us. Wow, the preacher is going off on us today. It sounds like he is preaching right at us. He keeps staring at us. Why doesn't he ever look at the other 40 people in the congregation? This is the third time today that he is telling us that we are living in sin and are going to Hell if we don't change our living situation. He is making a lot of assumptions about our intimate life and home environment. I don't think that I want to go to this church again. It sounds like we are on our way to Hell. There seems to be power in judgment.

Separation: Race, Gender, and Sexuality

Scene 4. [Telephone ringing] ////////////////

[Me] Hello.

[Principal] Good morning, Brandon. How would you like to serve on the interview committee?

[Me] I would love to.

[Principal] Ok, meet us at the job fair in the morning.

[Me] Great! Thank you! I will see you in the morning.

Narrative: I am finally able to have an influence on a campus. I have never been a part of the interview process from this side before. I wonder how this works. I have ten minutes to get to campus. I arrive. Wow, there are a lot of cars in the parking lot. This is simple. I just take applicants resumes and quickly review them and provide feedback. We have been here for five hours and now have three strong candidates based on their resume. I just realized that everyone else on the interview committee goes to the same church. I wonder if they will talk about the candidates tomorrow at church? It seems like that is a common place for common conversation.

Monday is finally here and I am looking forward to our interview committee meeting. Meeting starts and each person shares their first impressions of the three candidates.

[Female Committee Member One] This guy here seems to be really smart. He double-majored in college, but this will be his first teaching job.

[Female Committee Member Two] I agree that he seemed really smart. I don't think he will be a good fit on our campus though.

[Principal] Why not? He is a Black male with a double-major and strong transcripts.

[Female Committee Member Two] I just don't think he will fit in. I don't think he is what our children here need.

[Principal] I am not understanding, please elaborate.

[Me] I don't understand either. I think he would be a great addition to our campus.

[Female Committee Member Two] I just don't think our students need to be in a classroom with him. He just didn't seem right to me. It is kind of what we discussed yesterday in Sunday school at church. He will have an influence on our children and I don't think he makes the right lifestyle choices.

[Principal] I understand. Well, if you don't think he would be a good fit, then maybe we need to look at the other applicants.

[Female Committee Member One] I think we should look at other applicants.

[Me] I am confused. Are we not considering this person any more due to the assumption that they may live a different lifestyle than you?

[Female Committee Member Two] No. We are no longer considering the applicant because we don't feel that they would fit in here and provide the students with what they deserve.

[Principal] Ok. Thoughts about this next applicant.

Narrative: It really seems like they are making a decision based on their assumption of my friend's sexuality. What happens next? How do we prove this is what is happening. O is going to be devastated. There aren't any protections in Texas anyway. Believe that.

Separation: Class and Race/Ethnicity

Scene 5. [Financially Wealthy Baptist Dad] What is my daughter doing in there with all of those kids? I thought this was the advanced class.

[Assistant Principal] All of our students are engaging in an advanced curriculum now.

[Financially Wealthy Baptist Dad] I don't want my daughter in that classroom any more.

Narrative: It has been a long journey to de-track and provide an advanced curriculum to all students here in Doches. This seems to be the best start to an academic year since I started teaching. It feels like there are not as many *borders*. Expectations seem higher and the environment seems positive. Whoa! Who was that dad in the hallway making those comments? I can't believe that he said that. He looks familiar. Oh, yes he goes to the big Baptist church that has several deacons who are key decision makers for our community. It is obvious that he is making race and class based judgments. I can't believe that the principal was just called to the superintendent's office. Whoa! We are being forced to re-track, re-segregate our classes. Our principal is being pressured to retire at the end of the year. We have to re-track by October 1, 2010. I can't believe that one man has the power to make us re-track and completely restructure our campus. I have to face my students today. I believe that they realize now that the intention of this school is to educate a few presumed smart, wealthy, White kids, and to school everyone else. How is this legal? How is this the Christian thing to do?

Dialogue: Engaging in the Struggle

Scene 6. [Me] Wife, I am in pain and I don't know what to do.

[Wife] What do you mean baby?

[Me] I have spent most of my life dedicated to being a 'good' Christian man. I have went to church as expected. I have witnessed as expected. I have worked hard to be a gentleman and a dedicated son of God. I have served as a moderator of the youth association. I have lived by the literal interpretation of the King James Version. I have accepted Christ as my savior. I have worked to overcome my sin to be a better person. I am now struggling in a way that I have never before.

[Wife] Have you prayed about it?

[Me] I have. Have you ever really thought about what we are doing from a broader vantage point?

[Wife] What do you mean?

[Me] When we first got together, you hadn't spent a tremendous amount of time in church. I remember our struggle because I was trying to take a dominant role and expected you to be submissive. You were a very strong-willed, independent person and we clashed from time-to-time. When I reflect on those memories, I feel that I was working to change you to take the role of women in the Baptist context. Now, I am struggling to understand why males should serve dominant roles.

[Wife] It was different when we first started dating. But I don't feel like you have ever disrespected me. I think intentions are good, but I do see where there were some double standards and specific gendered expectations/limitations. There are times that I really

enjoy church, but I struggle with judgment. I often struggle to understand if we respect others when we are trying to share testimony.

[Me] Me too. When we are trying to spread the word, are we really being considerate and open to others? How do we move forward?

Narrative: Where do we go from here? How does this impact our identity? What does this mean to me as a teacher? Do we dare question what we have always been told not to question. FEAR. I feel sick. I feel tired. Why does everyone default to religion when I try to engage in critical conversations? Wait. That is what I have always done.

Discussion

As mentioned earlier, utilizing a layered approach provides “readers layers of experience so they may fill in the spaces and construct an interpretation of the writer’s narrative” (Ronai, 1995, p. 396). Applying a layered approach is an attempt to be reflexive, an attempt to remember my thoughts and feelings at the moment of interaction. It is also an attempt to deconstruct how those moments impacted my socialization in which I believe occurs in a very specific and arguably intentional manner. Another layer is the inability to remove my current perspective and feelings as I revisit these influential moments in my past that directly will impact the way that I move forward and continue to be socialized. The beauty of applying a layered approach to critical autoethnography is that it allows for the construction of a portraiture that reveals the most discrete nuances as well as those that are more blatantly obvious.

At the end of scene one, I stated, “we are the lucky ones.” Now I question, are we really the lucky ones? The idea of separation from my experiences in the Baptist community has been problematic, isolating, and *othering*. The creation of these borders (Anzaldúa, 2012) has

perpetuated a certain privilege and power to some while providing a consciously justifying excuse through scripture. By the age of six, I was socialized about what the role of women was in the church. The male voice is important and should be heard and respected. Women were expected to sit and play the piano while men were to stand and lead the singing. Men would often stand and lead prayer, women rarely led prayer. Only men were allowed behind the holy pulpit to preach sermons. Women were expected to be in a state of beauty. Hair and make-up perfect while wearing modest dresses and heels.

What was different about the experience in scene one was the arrival of someone hoping to attend church. This was the first moment that I understood explicitly that there was a construction of difference across racial identities (Orelus, 2012). Our communities were small and interactions were limited. However, I cannot understand what that experience may have been for that male of color that entered our church when I was six, but it was the first time that I had seen our church engage explicitly in *separation* across race or ethnicity. Applying a framework such the *borderlands framework* (Anzaldúa, 2012) and *conscientization* (Freire, 1970) as the process to *naming* (Freire, 1970) the construction of *separation* are critical in constructing a new consciousness toward *border crossings* and destruction of *border walls*. Churches, schools, and communities continue to be segregated through the design dictated by *border* categorizations of *our world*.

Separation across race did not only occur at church. There are three distinct groups of students in Augusta. The White kids from inside the city limits who come from families with financial wealth, White kids from rural communities that are mostly impoverished, and Black or African American kids from within the city limits. Scene two was the first of many occasions where I ask to invite over a friend of color to spend the night. A friend of color never stayed the

night at my house while I was living at home. One can only wonder the influence that the implication of *no* meant to various friendships. In our rural community, everyone interacted in a carefree way. I quickly entered dissonance about the dynamics of race. The reality was that everyone in the rural community looked similar, came from similar backgrounds, and attended the same church. When I was trying to cross borders, the implied values of separation sustained border walls instead of creating border crossings from the oppressive dynamic. Progressing through life, it has become clear why we moved from Vine to Pine Lake. My experiences in Augusta ISD were not embraced by my family and my family was desperate to find a more optimal learning environment for me. Beyond schooling, my family struggled with the way that I was being socialized by the *others* that were not *of our world*. Problems become more complex beyond the physical experience. When consciousness begins to be influenced by different philosophical traditions from *other worlds*, by different cultural traditions from *other worlds*, and by different social traditions from *other worlds*, dominant forces began to use forms of capital to enact change. It may be that for my family, I was leaving *our world* and was entering an area of the *borderlands*. They chose to re-establish a commitment to *our world* through relocation.

Just as my family engaged in the relocation process to respond to *separation*, the administrators in Kirby were trying to impose power, privilege, and judgment because we were at a moment of being *outside of their world*. Our actions of establishing a home environment that was in opposition to *their world* created a sense of discomfort and they began to magnify their voices about which world we were a part of. The *borders* were clear to us. However to what extent would the visibility be to someone that was not familiar with the local sociopolitical environment? These forces were present from many different angles over about one year. The same type of *othering* and *border sustainability* occurred during the interview process in scenes

five and six. Depending on the side of the Baptist *borders of separation* in which one exists can have a tremendous influence on life choices and life chances in a predominant White and Baptist locale.

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