

Teaching Bodies in Place

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Background/Context: *This piece draws on literature in justice-oriented teacher education, feminist pedagogy, and postmodern notions of bodies and place to make sense of data generated from a three-year study of an undergraduate teacher education course. A feminist lens was used to engage a body- and place-focused pedagogy that aimed to engage students in recognizing themselves as full-bodied and cultured beings who can work to better understand and expand their perceptions of themselves and others in place.*

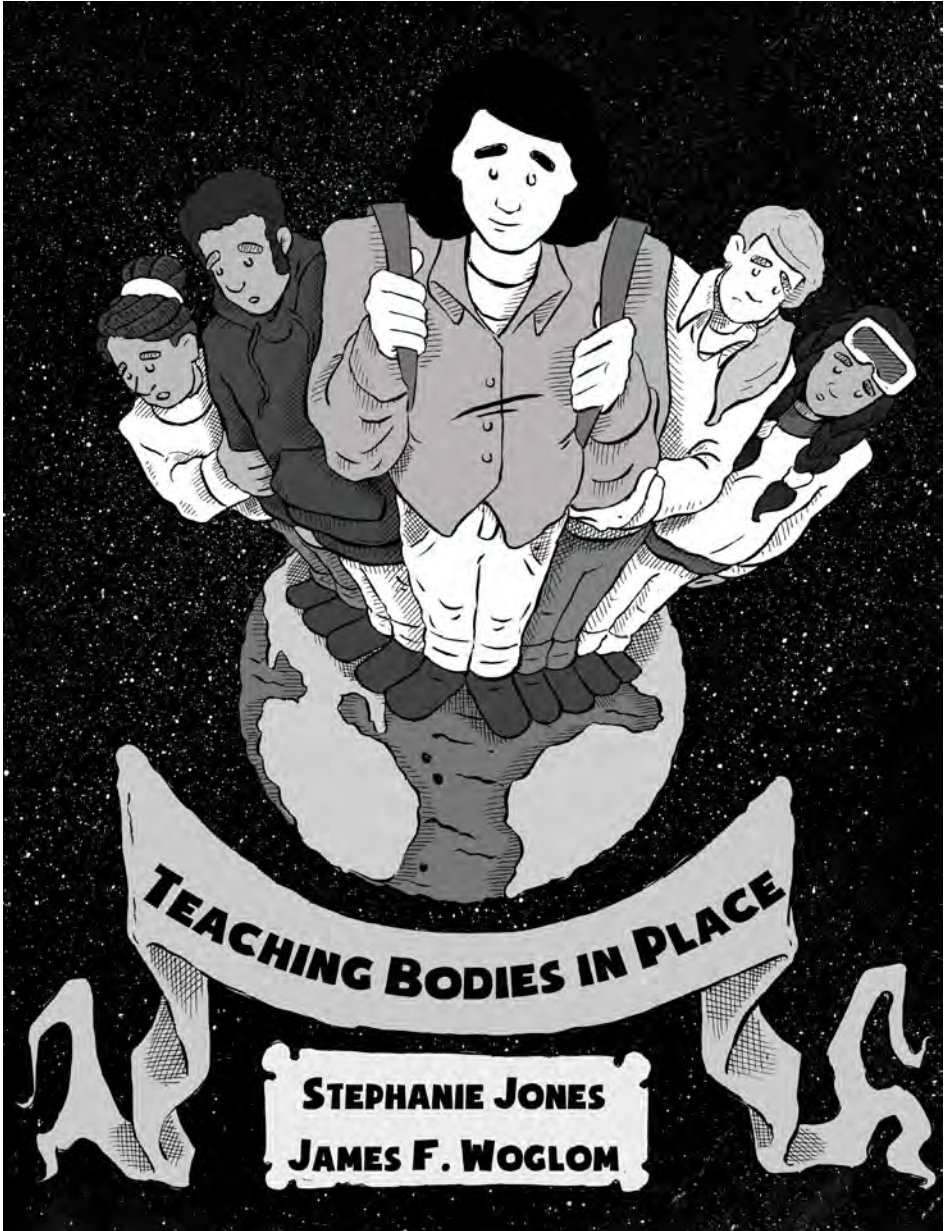
Purpose: *The authors argue that postmodern theories of bodies and place can provide complex insights for both theorizing and practicing teacher education. Readers have the opportunity to experience alternative community-based teacher education practice through a graphic presentation and consider both the theoretical and practice implications in the broader field of education.*

Research Design: *This three-year study is an arts-based qualitative inquiry into the experiences of a course where feminist and postmodern notions of bodies and place informed the pedagogical decision-making of their professor (Stephanie Jones). Data were generated across three years and those focused specifically on or around the community bus ride were used to ask questions about how bodies and places interact with one another to produce sense-making about people, places, and the purposes of education. As part of the inquiry, Stephanie produced visual images in comics-form presenting pedagogical interactions and experiences that illuminated theoretical insights and then engaged Jim in conversations and sketch-sharing about theory and practice related to the data and how it was experienced in real-time by Stephanie. After numerous conversations looking over each panel and analytical discussions about bodies, place, and pedagogies as they were produced on the page and multiple revisions of both images and print text, Stephanie and Jim settled on the graphic production published here as both a representation of the research and a provocation for reimagining teacher education practice and scholarship.*

Conclusions: *The study is an example of how pedagogies informed by theoretical understandings of bodies and place can produce practices that help teacher education students recognize their bodies as central sites for critical change inside and outside institutions. Tending to, documenting, and discussing their bodily-ways-of-being in different places and how bodies/places produce perceptions of others were powerful practices that helped students think deeply about power and their roles as future teachers.*

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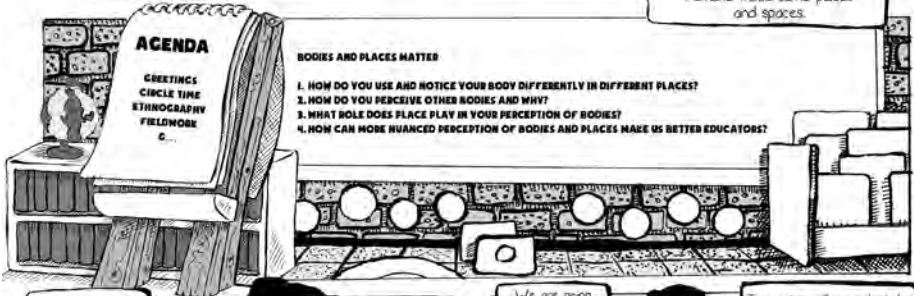
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Bodies are performed and felt, perceiving and perceived, material and affect, social and individual, rigid and fluid. Bodies are too rarely tended to in Teacher Education.



Bodies are made and remade through the places/spaces they move in, just as they make and remake those same places and spaces.



AGENDA

- GREETINGS
- CIRCLE TIME
- ETHNOGRAPHY
- FIELDNOTE C...

BODIES AND PLACES MATTER

1. HOW DO YOU USE AND NOTICE YOUR BODY DIFFERENTLY IN DIFFERENT PLACES?
2. HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE OTHER BODIES AND WHY?
3. WHAT ROLE DOES PLACE PLAY IN YOUR PERCEPTION OF BODIES?
4. HOW CAN MORE ADVANCED PERCEPTION OF BODIES AND PLACES MAKE US BETTER EDUCATORS?

Habitual perceiving of bodies and places can be recognized and constantly re-imagined, new stories told and sedimented ones disrupted.



You can change the world by changing how you live in the world.



We are going to re-ignite bodies and places through ethnography.

I promise we'll come back to your concerns. You may even find your own answers along this ethnographic journey.

But I'm worried about classroom management.

What's ethnography?

Will that help me be a more creative teacher?

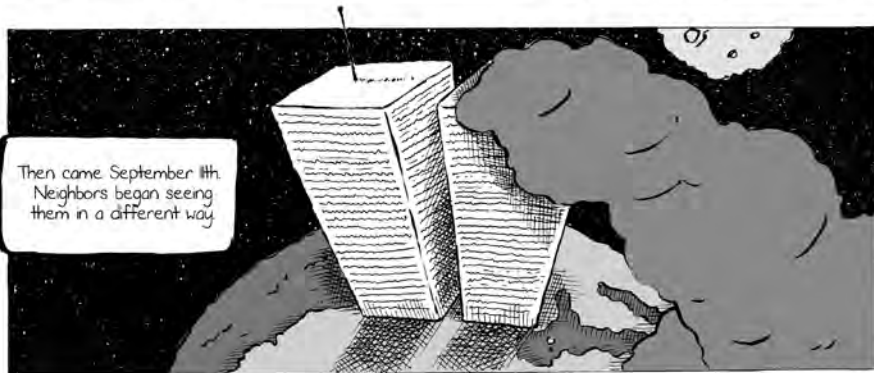


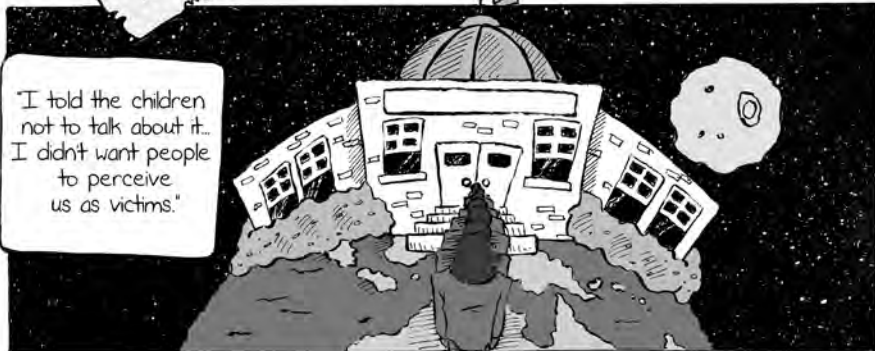
The world is so complex. Perceptions are always partial, messy, and biased.

Ethnography can open up the complexities of a place and encourage a broader and more nuanced perception of bodies in places.



Your first ethnographic assignment is an analysis of an audiotape.







On the first anniversary of 9/11 Chloe's teacher taught about the tragedy

"You're one of those bad Muslims aren't you?" students asked Chloe.

"No, no I'm not," Chloe told them.



Later the teacher read Christmas books every day in December, claiming that, "Jesus' blood will save us all."

Students saw Chloe as a different person and the taunting began.



Her teacher had her convinced that she was bound for hell because of her faith.

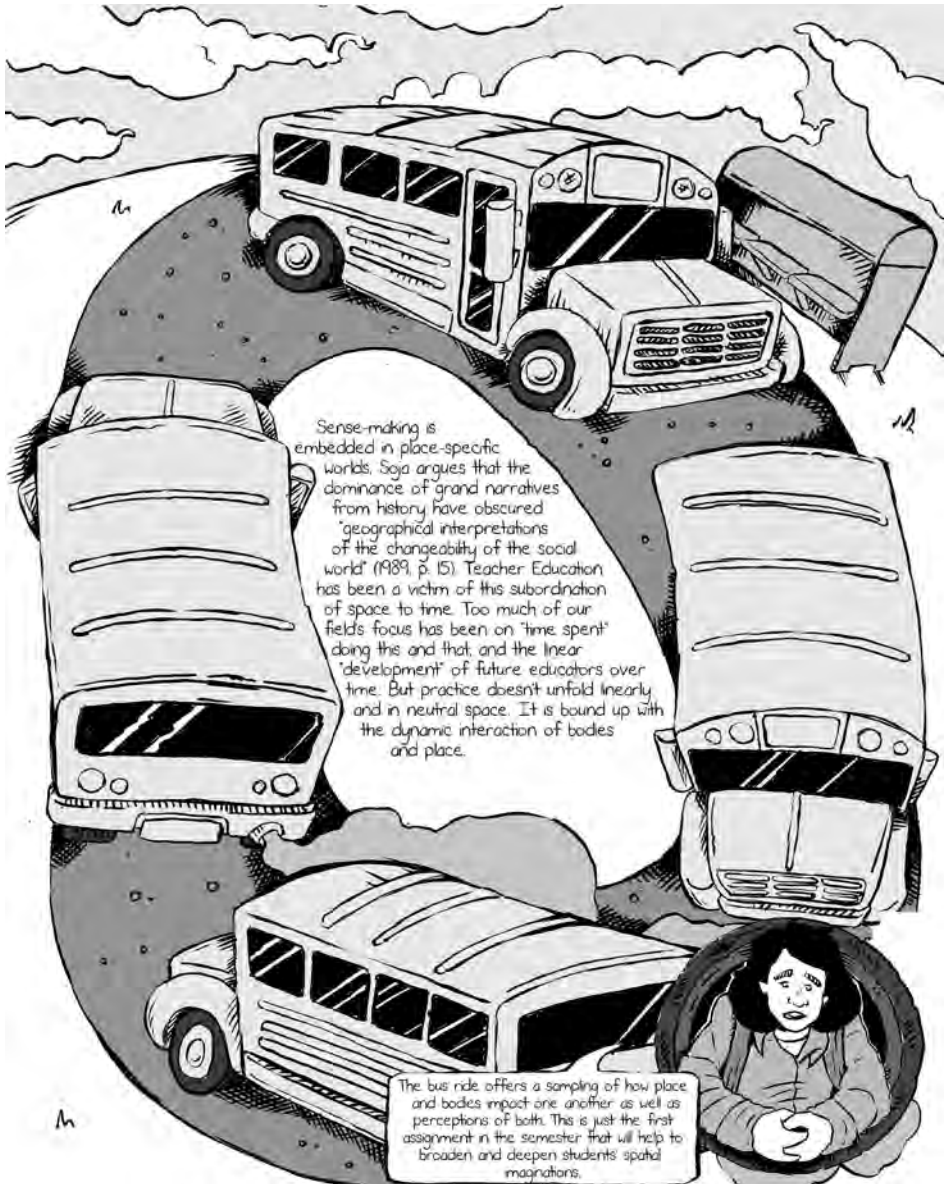
And in a way she was already there.







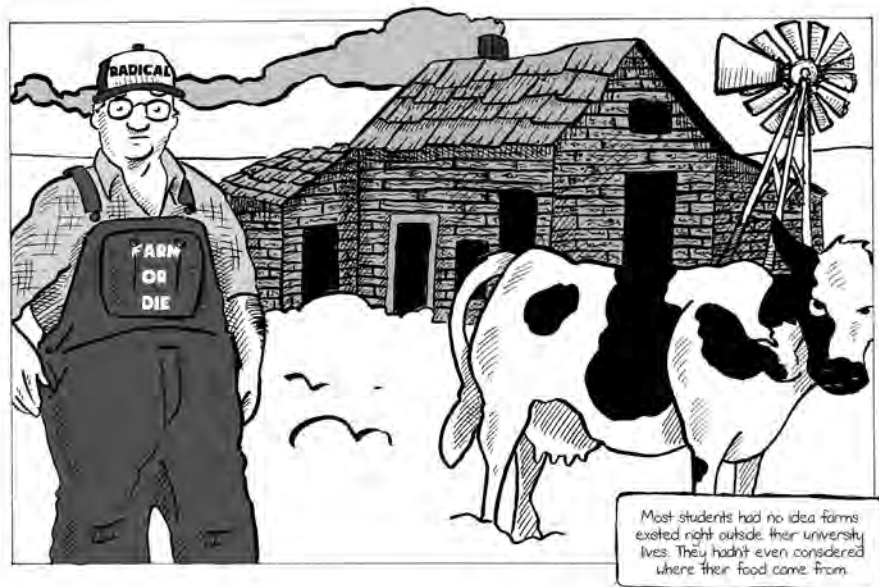
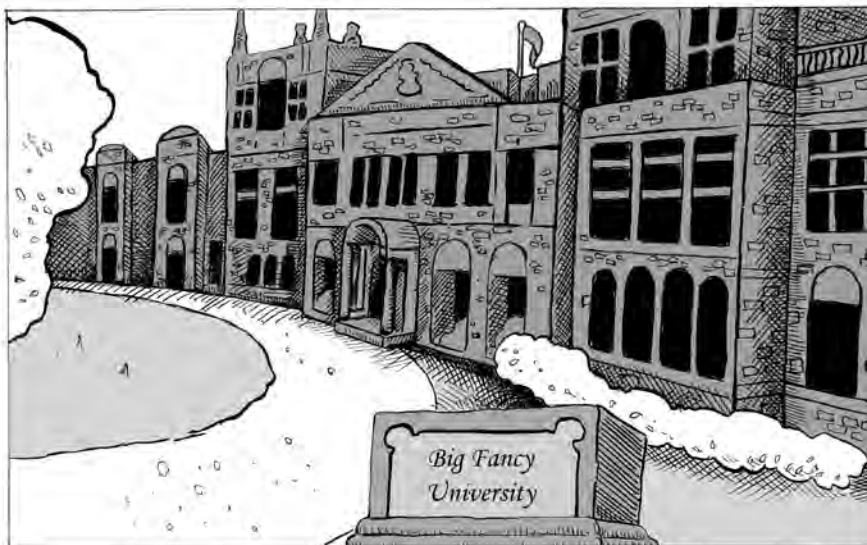




Sense-making is embedded in place-specific worlds. Soja argues that the dominance of grand narratives from history have obscured "geographical interpretations of the changeability of the social world" (1989, p. 15). Teacher Education has been a victim of this subordination of space to time. Too much of our fields focus has been on "time spent" doing this and that, and the linear "development" of future educators over time. But practice doesn't unfold linearly and in neutral space. It is bound up with the dynamic interaction of bodies and place.

The bus ride offers a sampling of how place and bodies impact one another as well as perceptions of both. This is just the first assignment in the semester that will help to broaden and deepen students' spatial imaginations.


















You all talked about your bodies, how they felt and how you used them differently on the bus. This example of being afraid because of the way you might perceive someone else's body is important. Many of us have been taught from an early age to make quick assessments of people and places as a way to keep ourselves "safe."


But those quick assessments can be very dangerous when we rely on stereotypes to make them. As professional educators it is absolutely imperative that we recognize why we perceive students, families and others the way we do. Then work to expand those perceptions and allow ourselves to be pleasantly surprised at the way they may change. For example, you may have students who are just as scared in school as you were on the bus.



Who would be scared at school? I loved school. It's the one place where I always feel pretty comfortable.



Yeah, I can relate to that. I never really fit in with school very well. I was in trouble all the time.



Sometimes I kind of feel scared in here. Some of these topics make me anxious.

Michel Foucault writes brilliantly about how the body is disciplined through discursive practices. State institutions are particularly successful at producing docile bodies, or punishing the bodies that resist.





The habitus will shift and change when it experiences different sociopolitical places - or fields - and feels the way capital is embodied across different spaces. These future teachers are working toward a reflexive sociology imperative for them to make sense of their work with students in institutional spaces.

Judith Butler

Valerie Walkerdine



Pierre Bourdieu

Yes Pierre, so bodily contours and morphology are not merely replicated in an irreducible tension between the psychic and material but are that tension. These students are living that tension—recognizing the impossibilities of perceptions of the material and assumptions about the psyche.



Manifestations of the tension you speak of, Judith, can be located in social interactions in the absence of oral language. For example, the ways in which pejorative evaluations are targeted at some bodies are not lost on those targets. Some of the students here presumed they were the targets of pejorative evaluations—a lived experience that provides a way of knowing one can't acquire through language alone. These are the ways in which a kind of subject is produced, regulated, and lived—and so important for teachers to consider.



Bronwyn Davies

I would add, Valerie, that the subject is constituted through social structures and through language. And speaking subjects can invent, invert, and break old structures and patterns of discourses—speaking and writing other ways into being. The offers hope for teachers working to change the ways students are talked about and thus what becomes possible for students in education.

Dorothy Allison



Great point Bronwyn which is one explanation for why I have a deep abiding desire to live fleshed and strengthened on the pages I write, not cheapened or distorted, and not to please any damn body at all.



Judith Butler

I love that Dorothy. Much theorizing happens around the production of the docile body through social prohibitions in and across particular places. But the prohibitions don't always produce the conforming body and you offer a terrific example of lived performative politics by denoting many conventions through your writing. Many students attempt to resist prohibitions, everyday, and perhaps teachers might be more open to recognizing that if they hear your voice.

Pierre Bourdieu



All of this seems reasonable to me, but the body is not an individual entity or project. The body also performs enduring practices reflexive of a larger group—an institutional habitus embodied by teachers. For example, if bottom line, perhaps, is his neglect a naive kind of materialism that tends toward physicalism which treating the body as a thing that can be measured, weighed, and counted, aspires to turn the science of man into the science of nature.



The "bodies" in teacher education often feel comfortable in school settings, or they wouldn't be subjecting themselves to a future career lived in schools. This may make it difficult for them to recognize how or why students and families don't "fit" in the space of schools. Getting future teacher bodies into unfamiliar places can help them analyze various reasons why someone may feel comfortable or uncomfortable, included or excluded, powerful or powerless in different spaces.







STEPHANIE JONES is associate professor in the Department of Educational Theory and Practice at the University of Georgia where she teaches courses on social class and poverty, feminist theory and pedagogy, place-based teaching, early childhood education, and literacy. Stephanie is interested in intersections of gender, social class, bodies, place, pedagogies and social change and her scholarship has been published in journals such as *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *Curriculum Inquiry*, *Educational Researcher*, *Gender and Education*, *Harvard Educational Review*, *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *Language Arts*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*. She is the author of *Girls, Social Class and Literacy: What Teachers Can Do to Make a Difference*.

JAMES F. WOGLOM, a multimedia artist and educator, is working toward the completion of a PhD in art education at the University of Georgia. His work has appeared in *Harvard Educational Review*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Education*, *Unsplendid*, on the cover of *New South*, and in an anthology published by Stylus Press.