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Shifting Positionalities Across International Locations: Embodied Knowledge, Time-Geography, and the Polyvalence of Privilege

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Shifting Positionalities Across International Locations: Embodied Knowledge, Time-Geography, and the Polyvalence of Privilege

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Abstract

Despite a robust body of scholarship on positionality, the practice of international higher education research often neglects engagement with the varied, fluid, and complex positionalities of researchers across national boundaries. Through a series of vignettes, the authors argue for reflexivity that extends beyond rigid social identities and towards embodied knowledge, or self-understanding that is mutable and context-responsive. For international mobile researchers especially, new affinities can evolve through propinquity and social custom, and gradually become incorporated into self-knowledge with the passing of time. Beyond mere cultural competency, this article raises the importance of symbolic competency that simultaneously negotiates the multiple dimensions of language, various forms of capital, as well as evolving social identities in conducting research in different contexts.

Abstract in Spanish

A pesar de que el tema de la posicionalidad ha generado un cuerpo de estudio robusto, la práctica investigativa en educación superior internacional a menudo ignora la manera en que la posicionalidad del investigador(a) varía, fluye, y asume varios niveles de complejidad al cruzar fronteras. A través de una serie de viñetas, en este artículo exploramos un tipo de reflexividad que pueda sobrepasar identidades sociales rígidas y nos dirija hacia un autoconocimiento encarnado, mutable, y que responda al contexto en que nos encontramos. En el caso de movilidad académica, es indispensable reconocer que nuestras afinidades cambian en respuesta a la proximidad geográfica y costumbres sociales, y se incorporan gradualmente como autoconocimiento. Asimismo, sostenemos la importancia de desarrollar competencias simbólicas que nos ayuden a negociar simultáneamente las distintas dimensiones del lenguaje, formas de

capital, e identidades sociales en los diversos contextos en los que llevamos a cabo la

investigación.

Introduction

   Positionality posits three main tenets: 1) identities are complex and fluid; 2) they are enmeshed in power relations; and 3) they are contextually bound. Over the past two decades, the literature has reflected a salutary movement towards engaging the first two of these propositions, and there is a growing recognition of the importance of intersectional factors such as race/ethnicity, class, gender, age, nationality, and sexuality in shaping human experience (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Hutchinson, 2000; McCall 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006). However, some areas remain under examined. Our intent in this article to open up a discussion of what positionality means for scholars whose work (and lives) crosses national boundaries and to argue for a kind of reflexivity that goes beyond the mere acknowledgment of social identity as static and better accounting for the situational context. In so doing, scholars must recognize the worldliness, the fleshliness as it were, of experience, and the dynamic role that time and space play in how scholars approach the research task.

   Our argument stems from an observation of the scarcity of scholarly work addressing the importance of time and space in shaping a researcher's subjectivities. For example, the term "positionality" entails a spatial, geographic dimension, yet in much of research practice, the researcher is presented as atopic, atemporal, and disembodied; our identities presented as impervious to change and neatly telegraphed in the requisite methods section, not to be reexamined again in the remainder of the text. In reality, subjectivities shift and evolve as our bodies move through time and space. For researchers whose lives and labor take place internationally, this transnational dimension has implications for what "local context" means, in that our physical bodies, if engaging in research abroad for example, may be in a very different "space" than our minds, including our beliefs and assumptions. Social identities that are

marginalized in one country or region may be marginalized differently in others, or not at all. Social positions of one can also highly vary depending on the social positions of others in the same context. Learning the identity norms of the new context while still beholden to those of the old requires a constant renegotiation between self and setting and is an essential aspect of (self) knowledge creation.

To discuss the resultant changing positionalities and ways they influence comparative research, we present our argument in the form of vignettes ("moments") drawing from our respective training and careers. We purposefully select examples that move beyond the conventional approach followed in much of the literature on positionality (e.g., Creswell & Poth, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2014), which tends to foreground experiences directly related to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. While there is an evident need to examine the way in which positionality comes into play in these activities, we believe this approach can result in a hyper-compartmentalized view of academic life and labor. Part of our argument is for the need to recognize the polyvalent, complex, interwoven nature of both a scholars' work and social identities, and the ways in which they can be differently foregrounded based on context. By incorporating views on situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988), we demonstrate the often-neglected contextual importance of positionality by exploring how our respective "embodied knowledge" as transnational scholars with experiences of mobility and migration over time and in distinct settings shape our epistemologies and our engagement with scholarly practices, broadly defined. As transnational women of color, we discuss ways that our positions change across different national spaces and with different populations within them. We conclude with implications for the comparative education research field to more fully embrace embodied knowledge.

Multidimensional Subjectivities

Prior work by the authors and their collaborators (Espino & Lee, 2011, Kiyama, Lee, & Rhoades, 2012; Torres-Olave, 2011; Torres-Olave, 2012) has called attention to the complex relationships that students and faculty establish with the spaces they inhabit, and how that shapes their relationships to places and communities. This multifaceted dynamic not only applies to the more tangible communities like family, school, and work, but also to imagined communities (Anderson, 1991; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Wenger, 1998) that may be physically and geographically removed from our immediate environment. In higher education, this concept is reflected in Clark's (1984) classic master matrix, which stresses that, although scholars may be affiliated to both a host institution (a local, tangible, immediate community) and to their respective field or discipline, they are also linked to a community of practice that reaches beyond institutional boundaries. In sharing ideas with peers in one's department, connecting via email to colleagues at other institutions, traveling to conferences across the globe, the community of practice operates at different scales (sometimes simultaneously, or in the span of a single work day) and it is unequivocally a defining factor of the academic profession.

However, one problem with the view of disciplinary affiliation as the defining source of identification for scholars (Lee, 2004, 2007), as well as similar cultural conceptions of academics as cosmopolitans (e.g. Gouldner 1957; Rhoades et al. 2008) or as members of disciplinary tribes (e.g. Becher, 1994; Becher and Trowler, 2001), is that they assume a unidimensional view of culture and identity. This approach neglects the fact that university actors, especially those that engage in different forms or mobility, belong simultaneously to multiple social worlds and simultaneously play social roles at the local, national, and global levels. We are no less daughters, wives, citizens, or immigrants because of our academic affiliation—our social worlds

are an inextricable part of who we are, and they inform our intellectual and professional lives in complex and often unpredictable ways.

For example, in international higher education, the lack of multidimensional self-reflexivity is a significant limitation of the scholarship on academic mobility: similar to the conceptualizations of academic culture mentioned above, much of the literature tends to present a monolithic, static view of internationally mobile academics, by focusing on ascriptive characteristics of the latter such as nationality, region of origin, or gender, with little to no attention to the multiple, complex, sometimes conflicting subjectivities of these individuals (Davies & Harre, 1990; Marshall & Wetherell, 1989). A separate yet interrelated concern of such "nonunitary subjectivity" (Hollway, 1989) is a lack of nuance in how the field tends to frame the notion of the "international student" or "international researcher." Much like the identity fallacy entailed in the notion of the "global citizen" (Koyama, 2015), there is no such thing as an "international scholar" in the sense that an "international identity" does not exist. Rather, identifying someone as an international scholar (i.e., students and researchers) commonly refers to one of the following cases, or a combination of them:

- A scholar, regardless of citizenship status, whose work and focus of interest spans two or more countries;
- A scholar, regardless of citizenship status, whose training has taken place in two or more countries;
- A scholar, regardless of citizenship status, who lives and works in a country other than the country in which they were born or raised.

Part of the challenge for scholars who participate in international research is how to grapple with these multidimensional aspects of our lives in any genuine attempt at establishing

positionality. Positionality in this context must consider the multiple subjectivities of academics as well as the dynamic negotiation of the latter as academics move across the different legal, cultural, social, political places and spaces that they inhabit. This requires a consideration of space/time as "a contingent outcome of societal and biophysical processes that create places and positionality" (Sheppard, 2002, p. 319). Under this lens, positionality varies through space/time and can shift different points in one's "diurnal time-geography" (p. 322). For example, within the same 24-period an early career scholar could potentially move from a role as "expert" during an international conference presentation, to that of "nonimmigrant alien" at a border point-of-entry, to that of "doctoral candidate" at a meeting with a dissertation advisor, and so on.

Sheppard (2002) observed that, "[i]n principle, positionality can be mapped by depicting the relationships between different agents, in different places, and at different scales" (p. 323). For scholars the scale of interest may vary depending on the task at hand. In data collection it may be restricted only to time spent on the field, to days, weeks, months, or even years. More broadly, the scale relative to the career and life span of the scholar and the ways in which positionality can shift over time. However, an important caveat is that the relationship between positionality and physical distance is complex. Whereas proximity in Euclidian geographic space is generally thought to be symmetric, positionality often involves asymmetric relationships in that "core agents exert more influence over peripherally positioned agents' locations than vice versa" (Sheppard, 2002, p. 323). Therefore considering the role of power and privilege in shaping our relationship to others at given time-geographies is crucial in any discussion of positionality.

Likewise, positionality inevitably "involves the negotiation of multiple identities in relation to different people and social settings" (Hult, 2013, p. 65). This interplay has long been a concern of anthropologists and other qualitative scholars concerned with the distinction between insider

and outsider status during interactions with participants, for example. The insider/outsider dichotomy can belie "the complexity of negotiating multiple social identities across different settings and interlocutors by suggesting that one can have a singular identity as simply insider or outsider" (Hult, 2013, p. 64-65). Yet the polyvalent, conflicting nature of the self and the other are not suspended in the context of the research endeavor. Instead, it is possible for the scholar to experience various degrees of insiderness and outsiderness depending on how they are socially situated to (and by) participants from one moment to the next. This can happen at different moments during the research process (with implications for various aspects of data collection, analysis, and interpretation) but also after the research project has concluded and even across the lifespan (Chavez, 2008).

Time-Geography Moments

Considering all these elements together can help researchers practice a kind of reflexivity that goes beyond merely signaling positionality as a fixed intersection of identities in time/space, and rather engage with it as a multidimensional, evolving, and organic set of processes that may become activated at different times and places. In the following pages, we introduce four different "time-geography moments" in the authors' academic training and careers to illustrate some of the complexities involved in academic mobility and the impact they have on our understanding of positionality. Although each moment illustrates a different type of experience or phenomenon, the situaded-ness of the body in time/space is central to them.

Blanca Moment 1: "More Mexican than Mexican"

When traveling through Willcox, Arizona, two fellow international graduate students (both from Commonwealth countries) and I stopped at a local restaurant. Also sitting at the

counter were two customers talking to a woman who seemed to be the restaurant owner. She was relating a recent incident at her property, but beyond that I wasn't really paying attention—that is, until the words "spic" and "wetback" came up in rapid succession, and then repeated over and over. Despite not having grown up with these offensive terms as part of my vocabulary, of never having to endure that kind of hateful language being directed at me or my loved ones, my reaction was immediate and involuntary. I stiffened, the color rose to my cheeks, and I found it difficult to talk. I was angry and dazed, afraid to say anything lest I created a situation I could not control and which could jeopardize me or my companions, who did not at first noticed how upset I was. When they finally did, I tried to whisper an explanation and ask if we could leave. They could not understand why I didn't want to wait for our order. "It's just words."

Fries-Britt, Mwangi, and Peralta (2014) have observed that, when foreign-born students arrive in the United States, they bring with them racial and cultural orientations informed by social constructs and experiences that are unique to their places of origin and often quite distinct from issues of race and racism within the U.S. context. They further stress that implicit and explicit messages about race –communicated by faculty, administrators, staff, other students on their U.S. campuses, and the community at large—can have a significant impact on international students' perceptions of self. This was certainly the case for me. However, I would venture a corollary in the sense that the when, where, and under what circumstances this learning about race takes place can make a crucial difference. Until the event described above, I had not realized the extent to which I had incorporated the knowledge of minoritizing dynamics in the United States and how they marked bodies like mine with no regard for my humanity, individuality, or legal status. Incorporate: in corpore. This is the precise terminology for that experience. These

acts of imagination—of belonging—are carried in the body, and they continually evolve as we incorporate new meaningful affiliations that sometimes challenge our self-understanding as we age and learn how we fit in new contexts.

In Mexico, I had been part of the dominant society in significant ways. I spoke Spanish, the dominant language; I was brought up in an urban environment; I was not a member of an indigenous community; although my family was of modest means, I had access to an excellent education. This was the frame of reference I brought with me when I was granted a scholarship to study in Canada. During the next two years I became exposed to critical theory as part of my master's program. I also learned about the idiosyncratic forms racism and discrimination take place in western Canada, partly through listening to the stories told by minoritized friends and peers in the program. Yet my understanding of these issues remained largely at an intellectual level. Significantly, my stay in Canada was relatively brief and I was not a visible target for discrimination. My privilege had not been tested in any significant way: If anything, it grew exponentially, as I now had a degree from an elite institution in the Global North, from which I would reap a cumulative advantage in years to come, as I discuss later in this article.

When I announced my decision to pursue a PhD in Arizona, my master's advisor observed wryly: "You'll be more Mexican than Mexican there." Her words came to mind in the days following the incident at the restaurant. I was in my fifth year into the PhD program, and many messages about how I too was "raced" in this context how now had ample time to sink in and become part of how I related to myself and others. I began to dissect the "Willcox incident" in my mind. Were the restaurant owner's comments directed at me? I had no way of knowing. What I could be sure of was that my reaction to her words was intense, immediate, and utterly involuntary. At the same time, looking back it is quite evident to me that my exposure to and

incorporation of racial dynamics in the United States significantly impacted my perception of the encounter beyond the time-geography of the restaurant. Rightly or wrongly, I made weighty assumptions about the restaurant owner's own social position and background (white, middle-aged, middle-class, conservative). I would have no doubt interpreted her words and my position in that situation differently had I assumed she was a Mexican national, for example. After all, in Mexico the common slang "mojado" carries roughly the same primary meaning as the term that so offended me, but significantly it lacks a derogative connotation.

Blanca Moment 2: "Entrar por la Puerta Grande"

It was my first time attending a major annual conference in the field of Higher Education. My master's advisor was introducing me to the director of one of the programs to which I had submitted applications that fall. It was strange to put a face to The Name, He-Whose-Work was essential reading in my graduate training. Stranger still was to hear him talk about why I should choose his doctoral program—like I held the cards and it was they who had to make their case to me.

"So, Blanca, what will it take for you to come to Arizona?"

"Money."

I cringed as I said the first thing that came to mind. What I meant was that it would depend on whether I could obtain a fellowship to sponsor my doctoral work in the United States. I was afraid to give the wrong impression and hurt my chances of being admitted to the doctoral program. Yet he laughed and said, "Of course, that makes sense." A few weeks later I received an acceptance letter from his program.

"Traveling is a wordly phenomenon, always inscribed within material and symbolic fields of power" (Behdad, 1991, p. 45). Understanding the mutable nature of our multiple social locations and the weight they carry in the grids of power relations operating in society is important here. Yuval-Davis (2011) has underscored that by moving up different grids of power, individuals can potentially transcend social locations ascribed at birth, "either by moving from one category of location to another, such as becoming 'middle class' while being originally 'working class,'" or even by "becoming assimilated into a different national, ethnic or even racial collectivity" (p. 13). The opposite, of course, is also true: As I described in Moment 1, an ascribed characteristic (such as being Mexican) can carry a vastly different set of meanings and/or a significantly different location in societal power grids from one geopolitical context to another. [1]

In this moment, however, I clearly benefitted from induction in a network of power which made whatever talents I brought to the table not only visible to others but also magnified them. My mother called it "entrar por la puerta grande"—"coming in through the main door," the implication being that one is no longer asked to use the (smaller) service door. I was an unknown quantity when starting my master's degree and always felt that my credentials from a non-prestigious, regional institution in Mexico were deemed "inadequate by default" until proved otherwise, as is often the case with international students from the Global South (Sefa Dei, 1992). However, in the time-geography of the academic conference, in the ceremonial performance of being introduced to a powerful gatekeeper, I transcended what heretofore had been a disadvantageous social position. I was legitimized by a "world-class" education as evidenced both by my diploma and, critically, by my advisor's willingness to hold that door open for me. From then on, my international background would be an asset that compounded interest, as it were, even as I continued to develop my academic skills and proficiency. Likewise, over the

years the halo effect of my association with research-intensive institutions in Canada and the United States has played an important role in a range of situations, from facilitating participant recruitment in Mexico, to reducing the level of questioning and harassment at United States ports of entry that I had learned to expect growing up near the border.

Jenny Moment 1: Invisible at Home

I was invited to lecture at a symposium held at one of South Korea's top research universities. Five senior professors from outside the country were invited and among them, I was the only woman in the esteemed group. I was also the only invited scholar of Korean descent who was invited from abroad. The organizer, who was Korean, and the five international scholars were seated at a large round table and the organizer suggested we each take turns introducing ourselves to each other, starting from his left. Each professor took his turn and then it was mine. Before I had the chance to even utter a word, a Japanese professor on my left introduced himself, skipping over me. I was dumbfounded. Once he finished, the two white males (from the US and from Australia) immediately spoke up, "Jenny didn't have a chance to introduce herself." I furiously thought to myself, "This would never happen in the US" but soon recognized that I was not in the US. The Japanese man did not seem to notice any error and the two other Asian men said nothing. So I then introduced myself, despite feeling very offended and hurt inside.

As exemplified, one can be oppressed in one's home country, even when appearing as part of the majority. In the case of Korea as well as Japan, gender equality remains among the lowest compared to most OECD countries (OECD, 2017). Perhaps for this reason, the Asian men did not oppose, or even appear to notice, the Japanese man's oversight. He was their senior, in age

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and in rank, and it would have been culturally inappropriate for them to have openly challenged him and come to my defense. Yet the white men did, advocated on my behalf, and later expressed to me their disbelief to me later on how I was overlooked.

I was honored and demeaned in the same setting. On the one hand, I was part of a small group of esteemed international scholars. Even though I appeared as a local because of my Korean descent, I was treated honorably as an international guest for almost all of my time at the gathering. Yet another international scholar perceived me as invisible and took his turn before mine. Further, he showed no remorse and did not express any apology when I eventually took my turn after his, even despite the other male professors coming to my "rescue." Years later, I shared this experience with a mutual colleague from Japan who affirmed my interpretation; his action is not unusual for "men of his generation." I was already self-conscious as the only female at the gathering. And at that particular moment, I was not an esteemed international scholar, I was just an invisible woman in the room.

Besides these observable intersectional dynamics by the participants' genders, races and cultures (Yuval-Davis, 2006), I also responded differently in Korea than I normally would have in the US. Whereas I would have more likely expressed my true feelings and vocalized the wrongdoing, I repressed my anger because I felt like a visitor, even in my birth country. I also was well aware that what I experienced was not unusual in East Asia. As an invited guest, it is customary in Korean culture to show gratitude and politeness, which means restraining oneself from expressing any negativity. I purposely chose to adapt to the cultural situation than to assert my Westerness in this very non-Western context.

Jenny Moment 2: "You're White."

As a researcher in South Africa, I was required to submit a local security clearance for my travel visa. The application required me to fill out my background details, including my race. There were four options, as officially recognized by the South African government: White, Black, Coloured, and Indian. There was no Asian or Other option. I looked at the form blankly, knowing they would not accept an incomplete application. I asked the administrative officer, "What am I?" She looked me up and down and said, without any slight hesitation, "You're white." So I reluctantly checked that box and submitted my application.

According to Leonardo (2002), "whiteness is a not a culture but a social concept" (p.32), largely associated with power and privilege, but also historically based. Although I clearly appear Asian, this racial category has a complex history in South Africa's once apartheid government. The Chinese were commonly designated and treated as "black" whereas the Japanese were designated as "honorary whites." These racial categorizations were based on the respective country's relationship with South Africa, particularly around who was and was not privileged, and thus Koreans, with fewer ties to the country during apartheid, were less clearly categorized. While the officer did not ask me if I was Korean, I could only guess she came to her conclusion based on my American accent and dress. I have never nor would ever identify myself as White in the US but agreed to check that ethnic box in South Africa because I knew that my privilege as a US American in the country made me very White compared to the vast majority of South Africa's black population.

I also recognize in hindsight that I yielded my racial identification to another. The officer was "Coloured," (i.e., South Africa's official ethnic category referring to mixed races) historically treated as inferior to whites during apartheid. If the office was white, would she have labeled me

otherwise? When I shared my story with White South Africans, they agreed I was "White" but maybe because they already viewed me as privileged, coming from the US. The experience was profound for me, having grown up in the US as a "minority" and feeling like an outsider, coming from a family of immigrants. In South Africa, I was also clearly a member of the minority and also not a local citizen. Yet the difference was my minority membership in the latter was esteemed.

Engaging with the Multifaceted, Contradictory Aspects of Privilege

Engaging in international research demands that we become outsiders to different degrees. We will notice our foreignness, and if we don't, it will be pointed out to us by others. These degrees are inherently related to power and bodily presence. It is often bodies marked as Other, as abnormal, that carry the burden of explaining themselves, of justifying their right to exist and to occupy spaces where they have been historically unwelcome. This is important because, for example, had Blanca not been marked as a "brown body" as an international student in the U.S. (and no less in Arizona during a virulently xenophobic moment), she may have never stopped to consider her situatedness in such fine-grained detail. Similarly, Jenny's experience being "othered" in the panel of experts made it painfully evident that, despite a hard-earned and successful academic career, her gender still marked her as a less-than-legitimate peer in the eyes of colleagues for whom the subordinate status of women is considered a given. The sensitivity to this and similar microaggressions is well known to individuals with marginalized identities but can be even more pronounced in some cultural settings. Yet comparative research must not neglect our insiderness as well, even if that insiderness is limited. Both Blanca and Jenny were to some extent insiders in their vignettes, whether by physical appearance, social position, or roles, which informed their cultural interpretations to their experiences and subsequently, their

response (or lack thereof).   In particular, it is important to pay attention to the polyvalent charge of our status as academics, which, as illustrated in the vignettes, carries inherent power yet it is still subject to complex contextual negotiation vis-à-vis how others interpret our other social identities in specific time-geographies.

For scholars who are minoritized based on any number of physical, cultural, religious, or other attributes, the "permanent sociological vigilance" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 209) embedded in this type of negotiation is inextricable from the subtle and not so subtle discriminatory practices that permeate academic institutions (Simmonds, 1999). As such, it has fallen to women and scholars of color to do much of the work of calling attention to the role of power, privilege, and Otherness in shaping the research endeavor. In this sense it is an inescapable burden but also one that can help reveal new insights that challenge the limits of theories, institutions, and spaces that were not created with our embodied realities in mind. This latter step inescapably requires actively engaging with the embodied aspects of our knowledge of the world. Speaking from her work as a sociologist, Simmonds (1999) reflected that "[t]o talk about the body is to invite derision. We cannot invite bodies, ours and those of others, into sociological discourse without being accused of essentialism or narcissism" (p. 51). Yet to speak about the body, her body, is in fact a crucial strategy and technique to deconstruct her positioning as a "third world" woman and an academic in a western institution. Being conscious of herself "as a person, an embodied self, is what helps me perceive things that 'others cannot see or feel' as sociologists. This is what gives me a particular relationship with the subject of sociology" (p. 59).

As mentioned in the Multidimensional Subjectivities section, the literature on academic mobility often characterizes the latter in terms that isolate researchers' minds from their bodies—

as evidenced in the prevalence or terminology like "brain drain," "brain gain," or "brain circulation," or the disembodying notion of "flows." Yet there is a need to find ways to speak about the lived experience of international scholars that acknowledges the body as well as "the personal politics and productive tensions of international academic mobility" (Metcalfe, 2016, p. 138). Our approach in this article is rooted in our experience as scholars who have often had to grapple with the duality of being (or being categorized as) both international and minoritized (gendered/racialized) faculty, and the polyvalent relationships this positionality creates with privilege and alterity.

In this regard, the Moments presented here illustrate that, regardless of minoritized status in a specific time-geography, international scholars are embedded in multifaceted, contradictory aspects of privilege that come with the accumulation of cultural, social, and human capital embedded in our education and professional status. Yuval-Davis (2011) has stressed that, "different locations along social and economic axes are often marked by different embodied signifiers, such as colour of skin, accent, clothing and mode of behavior. However, these should not be automatically equated with subjective identifications and social attachments" (p. 13). For example, as border-crossing scholars (Blanca, from a Global South country, now an immigrant in the Global North; Jenny, from a Global North country, now a researcher in the Global South), we must be cognizant of the grids of symbolic power we are and have been embedded in, which of our embodied signifiers we can transcend (or not) in specific time-geographies based on the privilege accumulated over the life span, and how this incorporated knowledge is activated (or not) in relation to others. Failing to do so can have troubling consequences. On the one hand, it could lead to blind spots regarding how as "outsiders," international scholars can be elevated to positions of privilege. Whereas Jenny had always perceived herself as a "minority" in the US,

she was categorized as "White" in South Africa. Likewise, Jenny's teaching and research in South Korea is similarly complex and constantly negotiated. In the South Korean context, Jenny is among the majority race but elevated by her foreign culture (i.e., American) as an "international" scholar. Yet despite these temporary situatedness in privilege, sexism was experienced in both countries.

On the other hand, there is a danger of misappropriating discourses of victimhood and alterity when Global South intellectuals "who happen to have gained access to the privileged institutions of the West by virtue of their class and/or academic background" conflate their privileged experiences "with those of disenfranchised underclass immigrants in the metropolitan West" (Behdad, 1999, p. 45-46). Global South scholars often belong themselves—if not by origin, by the status conferred by academic work—to elites in our countries of origin. Of course, within these migrant elites we may yet find significant differences in status according to institution, discipline, gender, ethnicity, and labor status, among other characteristics. However, authors like Behdad (1999) stress the need to make explicit the "heavy cultural and economic baggage" that we bring with us as migrants. This "baggage" inevitably shapes our experiences as "indigenous bourgeois" likely to be metonymically taken to represent the disempowered members of their countries of origin while at the same time making us potential beneficiaries of academic practices of hiring, tenure-granting, publishing, and so on that privilege them over native marginalized scholars in the receiving country.

This is a positionality concern that has troubled Blanca in her time-geography as an assistant professor at an institution in the United States. Some aspects of it are ironic, perhaps even transgressive, like the fact that Mexican-born and raised scholar teaches a graduate course on the history of American higher education to groups of students who were, in the majority, born and

raised in the United States and who have first-hand knowledge of the system at the undergraduate level. That Blanca does not share any of those experiences does not put her expertise into question, but it does bring up larger issues of how her social locations and embodied signifiers are framed at times, most sensitively in relation to students who identify as Latinx.

As a critical scholars whose work and training is at least partly rooted in the US, we are keenly aware of gross underrepresentation of faculty of color in academic ranks (Ponjuan, 2011; Turner, González and Wood, 2008), the unwelcoming and potentially hostile classroom environment that these faculty often face at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Han and Leonard, 2017; Kelly and McCann, 2012; Pittman, 2012; Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, Pratt and Jaddo, 2011; Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, Salazar, and Griffin, 2009), as well as the crucial roles that the presence of faculty members of color play both in creating a diverse educational learning environment (Hurtado, 2001) and as powerful symbols of professional success for minoritized students (Ponjuan, 2011; Smith, Turner, Osei-Kofi, and Richards, 2004). Against this background, foreign-born scholars in the US often grapple with the duality of being (or being categorized as) both as an international and a minoritized faculty.

The implications of this duality for claims to alterity and affinity are complex. In Blanca's case, embodied and cultural signifiers like her accent, last name, and Spanish fluency can be deeply heartening to students looking for role models who share a similar cultural background. These markers also make it possible for her to understand parts of their students' histories at a level that feels close to the bone. At the same time, these shared signifiers can belie incommensurable differences rooted in positional privilege accrued over the lifespan—even cross-generationally—between faculty and students whose racial/ethnic background has marked

them as marginalized others throughout their lives, and those for whom that has not been the case. In other words, the cumulative, embodied knowledge of being Mexican can be vastly different depending on whether its time-geography denotes a position in dominant society or along its margins. In Jenny's case, she shares the same racial and ethnic background as most of the students and faculty in Korea, but embodies a very different culture, having lived almost all of her life in the US. On the surface, she is an insider, whereas besides her appearance, she is not. Despite these privileges of appearing as part of the majority and treated as an international scholar, she felt marginalized due to her gender and cultural interpretation of being overlooked.

Reflexivity, Embodied Knowledge, and Symbolic Competence

As illustrated in the various Moments, a scholar's self-understanding is mutable and context-responsive. A consequence of international mobility is that new affinities can evolve through propinquity and social custom, and gradually become incorporated into self-knowledge with the passing of time. In this sense, Hult (2013) observes that one of the major challenges facing researchers is "managing the presentation of who they are and who they are perceived to be" as they move across different social contexts (p. 65). Haraway (1988) further warns about the "serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions" (p. 584). This can be particularly challenging in the case of international and bicultural scholars whose work requires them to learn and navigate a new social system with a shared, historicized understanding of reality with which the former may not be as intimately familiar. Challenges become magnified when embodied knowledge is not considered in a diverse international team. Self and team understanding often requires developing a high degree of what Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) have termed "symbolic competence" in the case of social actors in multilingual settings. Such actors must "mediate complex encounters among

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interlocutors with different language capacities and cultural imaginations, who have different social and political memories, and who don't necessarily share a common understanding of the social reality they are living in" (p. 646). Symbolic competence is the ability to negotiate different subject positions discursively, psychologically, socially, and culturally by drawing strategically on symbolic systems to invoke localized meanings in ways that structure relationships with others in any given situation (Kramsch, 2008; 2009).

Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) further posited that bilinguals who demonstrate a high degree of symbolic competence "have a heightened awareness of the embodied nature of language and the sedimented emotions associated with the use of a given language" (p. 665). In other words, because "different languages position their speakers in different symbolic spaces" (p. 658), multilinguals learn to play with the various spatial and temporal resonances of language to negotiate different subject positions. In the case of international scholars, symbolic competence involves not only the negotiation of multiple linguistic codes and registers (in the case of multilingual researchers), but also of the vast array of cultural, social, and human capital accumulated over the years, as well as of the extent to which our social identities position us in different power grids at any given time-geography. Researchers must be keenly aware of the inherent power relationships embedded in how we choose to present ourselves in relation to others. For diverse international research teams especially, such reflecting upon such dynamics within a group is essential (Mosselson, 2010).

In this article, our purpose is to hint at the nuances that can go missing when positionality ignores embodied knowledge. All these internal landscapes co-exist and move along with us, and they jump to or recede from the foreground based on a situation, but always informing our experience of the world and those around us. Blommaert (2005) refers to this phenomenon as

"layered simultaneity"—the fact that our memories, our histories, are not confined to the past but are very much present in our bodies as realities to be both experienced and observed, and discursively deployed in real-time at different points in our diurnal geography. In a more practical sense, researchers' positionality statements alone do not ensure validity or trustworthiness. Rather, we suggest that comparative education research especially must be honest and reflective of the researcher and their particular locations in the particular timespan. As Haraway (1988) has asserted, "only partial perspective promises objective vision… it allows us to be answerable for what we learn how to see" (p. 583). Beyond simply acknowledging one's identity or role as static, we propose that comparative researchers consider added dimensions of time and space as a living practice to be observed as we interact with others, especially (but not exclusively) in carrying out research-related activities. As bodies moving through space we carry emotional, intellectual, utterly fleshly landscapes, and they inform our relation to ourselves and to those around us at all times. A focus on embodied knowledge means that we can and must indeed make concerted efforts to engage with positionality and reflexivity in much more multidimensional ways than is currently done in the field.

Note:

[1] In a broader time-scale, this phenomenon also hints at the "inherently capricious and erratic nature of racial categories forces their constant rearticulation and reformulation—their social construction—in respect to the changing historical contexts in which they are invoked" (Winant, 1994, p. 271).

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