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## Queer cultural capital: implications for education

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This article takes the concept of cultural capital from Yosso's (2005) work and transforms the model for queer communities. While Yosso identified five forms of cultural capital in communities of color (familial, aspirational, navigational, resistant, and linguistic), the author identifies an additional form: transgressive. Queer cultural capital can show teachers the strengths within queer communities and so allow them to have a positive, rather than a deficit, model of these groups. Brief examples for queer cultural capital are illustrated for familial, aspirational, navigational, and resistant, while queer linguistic and transgressive capitals are discussed in greater depth. Implications for K-12 teaching and working with preservice teachers are offered, as well as suggestions for future work.

**Keywords:** cultural capital; teacher education; teaching; queer theory; LGBT students

In 2005, Tara Yosso argued that POC have distinct forms of cultural capital. Cultural capital is a concept from sociologist Bourdieu (1986), and indicates the knowledges, advantages and privileges that come with membership in a social group or class. Although Bourdieu's theory can be interpreted in a number of ways, it is often viewed through the lens of the white middle class. In this framework, those not in the white middle class are viewed as having a deficit. Yosso (2005), on the other hand, used critical race theory (CRT) to explore the ways in which POC use their cultural capital in positive ways. She identified five forms of cultural capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, navigational and resistant. I argue that these are also found in queer communities, and posit an additional form: *transgressive*. These forms of capital are not autonomous; they overlap and intersect, illustrating the flexibility of cultural capital.

To keep this article in line with Yosso's (2005) focus on POC, the examples discussed here are from communities of color and I am employing theory from Chicana queer and feminist theorists. As a queer white woman, I am entering this project as an ally and an advocate. Meaning, I am taking

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Collins' suggestion, from bell hooks, in stating that I am an 'advocate for' Chicana queer and feminist theories rather than claiming 'I am' a Chicana queer or feminist theorist (Collins 2000, 35). In this way, I am heeding Anzaldúa's words about white allies, in that 'they will come to see that they are not helping us but following our lead' (1987, 85). Additionally, this analysis is intersectional, meaning that I will focus on the interlocking nature of different aspects of identity (Crenshaw 1991). Intersectionality is not an additive approach, as 'social divisions [are] constituted by each other in concrete ways, enmeshed in each other, although they each have their own separate discourses' (Guidroz and Berger 2009, 65). Furthermore, I am using queer to mean any individual who is not heterosexual and does not live within the confines of heteronormativity (which means that heterosexuality is considered the norm in society). I also think of queer in the framing offered by Chávez, who states that "'queerness" is a coalitional term ... that always implies an intermeshed understanding of identity' (2013, 7). While I am choosing to focus this intersectional project on sexuality, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, and nationality, there are undoubtedly other aspects of identity that should be explored in future work such as class, gender (particularly gender roles, as this is not something I discuss here), and disability.

In this article, I will explore how queer cultural capital may manifest using Yosso's (2005) framework with the addition of transgressive capital, and in turn discuss how this concept may inform education. To discuss queer cultural capital I draw from fields and theories such as: behavioral sciences (Knofler and Imhof 2007; Nicholas 2004), queer linguistics (Boellstorff and Leap 2004; Livia and Hall 1997), Chicana women's studies (Anzaldúa 1987; Arrizón 2006; Chávez 2013), black feminism (hooks 1994) and education theories (Gee 2012; Kumashiro 2001; Urrieta 2009; Yosso 2005). To take the reader on this queer journey, I will first discuss how Yosso's (2005) framework of cultural capital can be applied to queer communities.

### **Queer cultural capital**

As previously stated, Yosso (2005) argued that there are five kinds of cultural capital possessed by POC: aspirational, linguistic, familial, navigational and resistant. I argue that these are also possessed by queer communities, and furthermore, that there is a sixth form of cultural capital: transgressive. I will briefly explain aspirational, familial, navigational and resistant capitals, and then go into depth about linguistic capital, because it is the least obviously queer. These set the stage for my discussion of transgressive capital, which is vitally important to queer communities.

First, aspirational capital is 'the ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make dreams a reality'

(Yosso 2005, 77). One example of this is the constant work by queer activists for marriage equality. This work is conducted both on a state and federal level, despite continuous setbacks such as North Carolina's Amendment One. Second, familial capital describes family history and community memories, as well as social networks and resources. Yosso (2005) points out that familial capital encompasses a broad definition of family, and it is here that there is the most room for queering, as queer people often have 'chosen families,' meaning strong friendship groups that supplement, or sometimes replace, the families queer people were raised with. Next, navigational capital indicates the ability to steer through institutions that were 'not created with people of color in mind' (Yosso 2005, 80). Social institutions were not created with queer people in mind either, and so queer people have to navigate schooling, legal, familial, and other institutionalized systems in creative ways. This relates to 'resistant capital ... [which] refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality' (Yosso 2005, 80). This is perhaps the most visible form of capital in queer communities, particularly ones that are politically active. Yet it can also be argued that simply by living their lives, queer people are resisting heteronormativity and this more passive resistance may be a way to invoke change on a local level, particularly in socially conservative places. Resistant capital allows queer people to live more comfortably in their larger community, whether their resistance is overt or covert.

### *Linguistic capital*

Linguistic capital refers to the 'intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language or style' (Yosso 2005, 78). Yosso (2005) described the richness POC gain from their multilingual backgrounds. Since queer people come from all cultures and nations, we also have a diverse linguistic range to draw upon, as well as various queer languages used in different communities to signify recognition, desire, or gender and sexual differences (Blackburn 2005; Chang 2005; Kulick 1999). Additionally, studies have shown that queer people recognize each other through verbal and non-verbal signifiers even when in hetero-dominant situations (Knofler and Imhof 2007), such as the prolonged eye-gaze that sparks another's *gaydar* (Nicholas 2004).

When being queer is enough to get a person arrested or ostracized, people will come up with creative ways to recognize each other. Because of this, perhaps queer people are more likely to notice subtle communicative gestures or eye movements when used as signifiers of sexuality or desire (Mayo 2007). Rooke (2007), in an ethnographic study on lesbians' behavior in women's bars, called this embodied practice of visual and physical cues lesbian cultural capital. While these are not verbal forms of language, they fit with the communication styles part of Yosso's definition, and expand it

to include a wider variety of communication. This use of linguistic capital also incorporates Gee's notion of Discourse (rather than discourse), which goes beyond merely understanding verbal language to an 'identity kit' that includes 'words, deeds, values, feelings,' etc. and allows one 'to get recognized as a given kind of person at a specific place and time' (2012, 152).

In regards to verbal language, because 'there are sexual cultures ... there must be sexual languages' (Boellstorff and Leap 2004, 12). As such, these sexual cultures are tied to other aspects of identity, such as ethnicity and race, making them inherently intersectional. As with queer nonverbal communication, these sexual languages allow individuals to describe themselves privately and publicly, to express desire, and to serve as signifiers to others, serving as a form of queer cultural capital individuals can draw from. The way that language is a part of a 'transnational interchange of material and intellectual commodities' (Boellstorff and Leap 2004, 1) also allows queer linguistic capital to traverse geographical boundaries. In Indonesia, for example, women did not start using the word *lesbi*, from the English lesbian, until American literature was more widely imported (Boellstorff 2007). Furthermore, transnational and non-White queer people are likely able to use 'Borderland Discourses,' which exist in-between social spaces (Gee 2012, 185). These Borderland Discourses may be located in the spaces between heteronormative and queer communities, as well as between queer people from different ethnic or racial backgrounds (Blackburn 2005). A consideration of the diversity of queer linguistic cultural capital can help researchers, educators, and others understand the intersectional needs of queer POC (Kumashiro 2001).

Livia and Hall noted that 'if homosexuality (or lesbianism) is constructed within by its specific cultural context, then the term cannot be applied cross-culturally or transhistorically, for this would be to posit a homosexual "essence" independent of material circumstance' (1997, 10). So even though gay male English is seen as the norm (Boellstorff and Leap 2004), expressions of queer desire, queer 'insider speak,' or codified language vary among communities. For examples of this 'insider speak,' there are several alternative Spanish words queer Latina/os use instead of Western words such as lesbian. These words, as framed by queer Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa, describe 'the queer-mestiza body ... [outside of] white male and heterosexist discourses' (Arrizón 2006, 157). *Marimacha* is one word with homophobic beginnings that has been reclaimed by queer Latina/os. It indicates a woman who possesses 'sexual aggressiveness or one who dresses and looks like a man' (Arrizón 2006, 162). When it is spelled with a hyphen between 'mari' and macha," it suggests a queerness, a joining of feminine and masculine that shows gender as 'fluid and destabilized' (Arrizón 2006, 162). 'Panochtitlán' comes from the Spanish word 'panocha,' a crude word for vagina, and 'Aztlán,' the ancestral homeland of the Aztecs (Arrizón 2006). This linguistic diversity amongst queer

communities is a strength, as it allows people to draw from both their queer and ethnic linguistic capitals to create a stronger sense of self-identity, and to reflect the intersectionalities present in queer communities.

There are also examples of linguistic capital in transgender communities, which may not be familiar to mainstream LGB or straight people. Returning to Boellstorff's anthropological work in Indonesia, there are several words in Indonesian (the national language) and other local languages to indicate male transvestites or effeminate men. *Waria* is a combination of the Indonesian words *wanita*, meaning woman, and *pria*, meaning man (Boellstorff 2007, 82). According to Boellstorff, this word first appeared in government documents, and only indicates their gender expression, not their ethnicity. To illustrate both gender expression and ethnicity, Indonesians use words from the local language used on their particular island or region. For example, Javanese and Balinese men may use *ked*, Makassarese may use *kawe-kawe*, and Buginese may use *calabai*' (Boellstorff 2007, 83). Transgender people in the US use the letter T to stand for transgender, but it is also used as urban slang for truth, as in 'what's the T?' (Beam 2007). These examples show the way language can be manipulated to fit the needs of diverse communities.

The way that sexuality is described in a culture speaks to how it is valued and normalized, and so the way that queer people strategically manipulate language is another form of queer linguistic cultural capital. For example, queer people whose gender assigned at birth does not match their gender identity may purposely use words for the 'opposite' sex to show their defiance of these norms (Livia and Hall 1997). Additionally, queer activists have to work within the rhetorical framework of their home culture, and must figure out how to navigate this framework to their advantage. For example, in the US many current debates for queer rights are framed in terms of 'family.' Couples fight for equal rights for child custody and the right to visit partners in the hospital on the basis of supporting families, instead of framing it as 'sexual relationships' or 'queer liberation.' This use of a more neutral word takes away the fear that strikes some conservatives' hearts when they hear 'homosexuality' or 'sexual orientation' and simply think 'gay sex.' While this is veering from Yosso's (2005) description of linguistic capital, I argue it is in the same category as it is a strategic way of using language, similar to code-switching (Myers-Scotton and Ury 1977), in which a person alters their language, dialect, or patterns of speech and vocabulary to suit particular situations, such as African Americans switching between 'standard' and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (Godley et al. 2006). This example is also one of queer people using their cultural capital in combination (linguistic and navigational, in this case) to get to *transgressive* capital.

### *Transgressive capital*

I propose that there is a sixth form of cultural capital that is perhaps the queerest of them all: *transgressive*. Transgress is defined as ‘to go beyond a boundary or limit’ (Merriam-Webster 2013), in contrast to resistance, which is defined as ‘effort made to stop or to fight against someone or something’ (Merriam-Webster 2013). Theorists White and Stallybrass (1986) have explored what transgression means, looking to other theorists, such as Babcock, Foucault, and Huizinga. White and Stallybrass (1986) point out that transgression includes playfulness. They quoted Babcock’s (1978) description of ‘symbolic inversion’ as transgression: ‘any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, social and political (Babcock, 14)’ (White and Stallybrass 1986, 17). Foucault saw transgression as a disruption of boundaries ‘where what is in question is the limit rather than the identity of a culture’ (White and Stallybrass 1986, 200). This focus on questioning and limits hearkens to queer theory (Britzman 1995), making transgressive capital a natural addition to queer capital. Babcock’s expressive behavior and Foucault’s questioning of boundaries and limits add the element of play. Huizinga wrote that play and seriousness do not exist on a rigid binary but are fluid, and that play has a ‘spatial separation from ordinary life’ (1955, 19). This fluidity and space keep transgression separate from resistance as well, which must be rigid to stay strong. Given these ideas, where resistance capital is generally more *reactive* to oppressions, transgression is more *proactive*.

Transgressive capital, then, indicates the ways in which communities (queer or other minoritized groups) proactively challenge and move beyond boundaries that limit and bind them, creating their own reality. These limitations may include social categories (such as seeing sexual orientation or gender on a binary) or institutional boundaries (such as transgender children not being called the name of their choice in school). Transgressive capital can be seen as similar to transformative resistance (Solorzano and Delgado Bernal 2001), but I think it is more productive to see it as distinct from resistance to highlight how transgressive capital has a focus on space and includes play. Queer transgressive cultural capital can be used to describe the creative boundary play within queer communities, which shows these communities’ strength and flexibility. It can also illustrate queer communities’ potential to create lasting change. As Huizinga wrote, ‘a play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over’ (1955, 12). Transgressive moves of queer communities, in the form of transgressive cultural capital, can have a long-term impact after the boundaries have been crossed.

Transgressive cultural capital works to go beyond the navigation of and resistance to limitations to a transgression of normative and oppressive

structures. In the case of queer communities, it describes how people challenge and deconstruct oppressive structures through their chosen families and relationships, their social networks that cross social and physical boundaries, and by speaking up and around structural limitations. Queer activism often goes beyond the boundaries of sexuality and gender, for as Anzaldúa said, ‘identities cannot be located in a static model,’ (Arrizón 2006, 25). For example, in a complex investigation of queer Mexican male migration, Cantú Jr. found that the interactions of gay Mexican men and American tourists created safe spaces for both groups in Mexico, while the Mexican men faced racial discrimination in the US (Sin 2009). However, this fluid travel led to the questioning and restructuring of familial relationships amongst the Mexican men, as well as HIV/AIDS activism in Mexico, allowing multiple transgressions across geographic and social borders (Sin 2009).

One specific case of such a boundary transgression in the US is the ‘undocuqueer’ movement, made up of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) undocumented immigrants (Shore 2013). This term was coined (demonstrating queer linguistic capital) by Julio Salgado, a young immigration activist, as a way to highlight the lives of queer people in migrant communities and to show how they are leaders in the migrant rights movement (Chávez 2013). Undocuqueer and other immigrant rights activists purposefully used ‘a direct appropriation of LGBTQ political strategy [by] announcing a National Coming Out of the Shadows Day/Week (NCOOTSD)’ in 2010 (Chávez 2013, 81). While National Coming Out Day was started in 1987 by queer activists to encourage people to come out publicly of the ‘closet,’ NCOOTSD uses both the metaphors of the closet and of shadows, because shadows are often used as a metaphor for immigrant populations as they are often invisible to mainstream society (Chávez 2013, 88). As with the queer act of coming out, undocumented activists hoped that by coming out as undocumented, they could counter citizens’ stereotypes of undocumented immigrants. But coming out for undocuqueer people has more consequences than queer US citizens, as undocuqueers could risk deportation as well as social ostracization.

The undocuqueer movement points out one example of a border crossing, both literally and figuratively, that happens in queer communities occupied by POC. It also points to the multiple challenges faced by queer undocumented immigrants. For example, they may have no employment protection for both their immigrant status and their sexual orientation or gender identity. Transgender undocumented people may have no access to safe, gender-affirming treatment as their immigration status and gender identity may mean they are denied the healthcare they need. Currently, undocuqueer activists are not satisfied with the lack of support from the documented, mainstream LGB community, and think there should be more queer attention on immigration issues (Shore 2013). As undocuqueer activist



Salgado stated about the connection between being queer and being undocumented:

It's about being part of a community that is constantly marginalized and finding strength in what others see as our weakness. It's about finding a common ground and becoming a huge fist to punch the one bully we have in common. ... If you cannot see the connection, I don't know what to tell you. (Chávez 2013, 101)

Undocuqueer individuals' live multiple transgressions daily, and by connecting these aspects of their identity they show how the intersections are forms of strength. By bridging different activist communities together, undocuqueers go beyond resistant cultural capital (such as protesting discriminatory practices and spaces) to transgressive cultural capital (by going beyond geographical and physical barriers to create fluid activist spaces).

Perhaps part of the problem with connecting the immigrant rights and LGBTQ rights movements is that mainstream LGBTQ individuals and groups can only see the negative aspects of being undocumented and think that building connections would be too difficult. It might help if the undocuqueer movement was repackaged, so to speak, in terms of their linguistic and transgressive capital. This might allow more queer mainstream, or whitestream (Urrieta 2009), groups to see the assets of combining forces, and of building the coalitions that Chávez (2013) sees as necessary to queer activism. There is a lot of cultural capital within the undocuqueer movement that could be emphasized to encourage more connections between groups. For example, they are using their linguistic capital transgressively. The word 'undocuqueer' itself is a transgressive form of linguistic capital, as it goes beyond the limits of the English language to combine two words into one. As previously discussed, this one word illustrates the complex idea that their sexual orientations and gender identities are combined with their immigration status and can never be separated. As such, these activists cross boundaries between several movements, and can critique each for their merits and weaknesses. They also harness LGBTQ rights rhetoric to go beyond mere sexual implications, stretching this rhetoric to encompass citizenship as well. Those in the movement can also communicate effectively in languages other than English, and use these languages in combination with each other. These skills of making intersectional connections between groups, of critical inquiry, and of harnessing language in a transgressive way would be beneficial to all queer activist groups.

Some white, documented queer people may see citizenship as outside the reach of their activist missions, or at least not a priority. Yet Gloria Anzaldúa said 'as a lesbian, I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races' (Arrizón 2006, 155). Anzaldúa embraced the possibility of a space for queers to

come together across racial boundaries. This attitude is part of the queer mestizaje (which means mixed race Latina/o) identity, one that embodies an ‘in-betweenness’ (Arrizón 2006, 1) of identities. As Arrizón stated, ‘the queering of mestizaje ... represents the body as a border dweller capable of constructing its own space ... that resists negation and subordination’ (2006, 26). A queer mestizaje person, like an undocuqueer person, is a border crosser who lives in multiple worlds. And by living in this in-between zone, these queer people can better see how these boundaries can be transgressed and deconstructed. This is a strength all queer movements can draw from. Transgressive capital from these border-dwelling queer people can thus help queer movements go past aspiration and resistance to direct action. While some people are still trying to imagine what can be done to cross borders, undocuqueers are crossing them on a daily basis.

### **Future work**

Queer cultural capital is a concept I have used to describe strengths that are already a part of queer communities. Seeing cultural differences as assets and funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 1992) changes the prevailing dialogue from reactive to proactive, and allows for connections among activist groups. These assets must also be viewed in an intersectional, pluralistic framework that sees queer identity as inextricably linked to other social markers, such as race and ethnicity. The limited ‘focus on gender/sexuality in feminist and queer theories is always at the expense of the queer-of-color critique. The unfortunate consequence is to imply that issues about racialized bodies ... are secondary, threatening coalition building in the process’ (Arrizón 2006, 177). Intersectional scholar Michelle Fine had a similar worry, that some intersectional analyses now are ‘decoupling lives from political conditions ... [and] splintering social movements rather than creating the grounds for varied groups to come together’ (Guidroz and Berger 2009, 77). I have attempted to prevent this consequence by focusing on queer POC and the ways in which bridges can be built between white LGBTQ groups and queer POC groups, as well as between the curriculum and queer communities. As Yosso (2005) illustrated, cultural capital is not limited to the white middle class, and as I have argued, neither is it limited to white heterosexuals. Yet despite my intentions, it is possible that others will use this lens only as a way to benefit white queer people. It is also possible that I have emphasized queer aspects of identity over others. Future work could investigate how these aspects of identity may be emphasized in different situations, and how this alters how queer cultural capital is manifested.

Other spaces for future work include examining the theoretical and methodological implications of queer cultural capital. In this article I use queer transgressive cultural capital as a parallel construction to Yosso’s (2005)

identified forms. Yet I also described the term undocuqueer as transgressive form of linguistic capital, so might it instead be a layer above the other forms? Additionally, I used Foucault's (White and Stallybrass 1986) discussion of boundaries and the removal of limits to define transgressive: yet what remains when the limits are removed? The entity inside the boundary must change and shift with the removal of limits, but to what end? How can this change affect cultural capital, and is this change an example of queering in itself, that can be found in all communities? Lastly, I am interested in exploring using queer cultural capital with queer methods. This creates a tension, as queer capital is using queer as a noun, while queer methods (stemming from queer theory) use queer as a verb (Browne and Nash 2010). Furthermore, queer theory believes in completely disrupting categories and emphasizes how identity is in flux (Ruffolo 2007), while queer cultural capital relies on queer as a category. Yet despite these contradictions, I think queer cultural capital might inform queer methods in interesting ways, particularly transgressive capital.

### **Queer capital's implications for education**

Queer capital has the possibility to influence the classroom. Just as the concepts of funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 1992) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings 1995) have changed the way teachers and scholars think of diverse students, queer capital can also change mindsets about LGBTQ students and families. While many educators are aware of the problems faced by LGBTQ students, they may be unaware of the positive aspects of queer communities and subsequently unsure how to utilize them. In this section, I offer some suggestions for using queer linguistic and transgressive capitals in both K-12 classrooms and with preservice teachers.

### ***Linguistic capital in the classroom***

As a former high school English teacher, I see many opportunities to use queer linguistic capital in the classroom. Teaching students how to use language in a powerful way is a difficult task, and I often used Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (2008) to demonstrate the strategic use of language and writing. Within a queer linguistic capital framework, students could examine the Combahee Feminist Collective (1977), a manifesto from a black lesbian feminist group. Students could also research political campaigns by queer activist movements to decipher their uses of strategic language, and create their own ad campaigns using similar strategies. Lastly, teachers could use the examples of queer sexual languages to teach students how language differs between cultures, and to have discussions about identity, as such issues often come up in the context of literary discussions.

Teacher educators could also discuss these ideas with preservice teachers. There are great examples of the intersections of race and class with language, such as *The Skin that We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom* (Delpit and Dowdy 2002), and works that address the use of language as bullying and a way to reinforce gender norms and performance, such as Pascoe's *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School* (2011), but neither of these works address the positive ways queer communities use language as a form of cultural capital. bell hooks suggested that in the 'incorrect' English used by enslaved black people in the US there was actually 'a spirit of rebellion that claimed language as a site of resistance ... [this] also forges a space for ... different ways of thinking and knowing that were crucial to creating a counter-hegemonic worldview' (1994, 170–171). Teacher educators can use the spirit of this sentiment when teaching preservice teachers about alternative ways of identifying outside of the standard lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer labels. This can also be thought of in relation to transgender individuals using gender neutral pronouns (such as ze instead of s/he, hir instead of her/him, or they for either). While these pronouns may seem grammatically incorrect according to Standard English, they are a creative way of breaking from the heterosexist tendencies of language.

### ***Transgressive capital in the classroom***

While many Social Studies teachers include the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Rights movements in their classes, few include queer rights. Highlighting the ways that queer communities worked around institutional systems of oppression will add a fuller picture of history and activism. Furthermore, including discussions of sexuality in lessons on Civil Rights and Women's Rights activists will add nuance to these stories, and emphasize that we 'do not live single-issue lives' (Lorde 2012, 138). Taking an intersectional approach that explores multiple, interlocking forms of identity can help students see that issues are connected and complex, and to see the ways that their own lives intersect with others.

There are several transgressive, queer individuals who could be included in Social Studies courses. One example is Bayard Rustin, a gay African American male whose activism in the Civil Rights Movement was extraordinary, yet he is often left out of textbooks because of his sexuality. Rustin worked closely with Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. was responsible for organizing the March on Washington, and was a proponent of using nonviolent methods of protest (Brother Outsider 2008). Another example is Frida Kahlo, renowned queer, disabled Mexican artist. Many students learn about her disability after a bus accident, and of her marriage to artist Diego Rivera, but may not learn that she was queer and had affairs with women throughout her marriage. As many queer activists say, visibility matters, and

showing students that historical figures do not fit into neat categories will help queer and straight students accept themselves and others.

For preservice teachers, teacher educators could stress that viewing queer communities in terms of transgressive cultural capital can change the way they perceive students. Turning back to the undocuqueer example, looking at this movement as a source of activism and strength can help preservice teachers see beyond the problems they face, and look to what strengths they gain from their community. These students have community organizing skills and extensive social media and networking knowledge. The way activists like Salgado critique other immigrant rights movements and the mainstream LGBTQ movement shows sophisticated critical thinking and analytical skills. The use of rhetoric and even objects (such as using a bus for the No Papers, No Fear ride) from the Civil Rights and LGBTQ Rights movements illustrate a deep understanding of the importance of symbolism, which any English teacher will love. These skills are what teachers strive to foster in their students, and I think many would dream of having these student activists in their classrooms. Rather than focusing on the barriers they face, preservice teachers can benefit from looking at their funds of knowledge, and drawing from these in their future classrooms.

## Conclusion

In *Working from Within: Chicana and Chicano Activist Educators in Whitestream Schools* (2009), Urrieta discussed the dichotomy of ‘playing the game’ vs ‘selling out’ that teacher activists feel they have to negotiate in the classroom. Queer teachers, and teachers of queer students, also feel this pressure. If your principal or school district is not supportive of queer people, it can be difficult – or even dangerous – to show your support. But by using queer capital to discuss queer communities’ strengths, teachers can draw attention to the many aspects of these groups other than their sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Additionally, this can allow teachers to focus on the intersections of sexuality with race and ethnicity, to counter the stereotype that queer issues are white issues. Urrieta also stated that ‘activism needs to be rethought by viewing daily “moments” of agency in practice as activism. Agency and activism, through this perspective, are tools embedded in the mundane details of daily interactions’ (2009, 14). In a similar light, queer theorist Judith Halberstam wrote in *The Queer Art of Failure* ‘I believe in making a difference by thinking little thoughts and sharing them widely’ (2011, 21). Queer capital is my own little thought I would like to share widely, and I hope it becomes a tool used in the mundane interactions of the classroom and beyond.

In practice, queer capital gives us a way to focus on the positive aspects of these communities, rather than focusing on the negatives, such as bullying and suicide. While these issues are important, and great work is

being done to prevent them, I fear that by only talking about queer communities in these ways we are painting a dismal picture. It may be difficult for non-LGBTQ people to think of queerness as positive if all they hear is bad news. Similarly, if teachers are only trained on LGBTQ issues in regards to suicide prevention, how are they to feel positively about LGBTQ students? Teachers, particularly those committed to social justice, can use the lens of queer cultural capital to bring light back into a dark conversation, as well as an intersectional consideration of how sexuality informs other forms of identity.

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