In just 90 minutes I will begin teaching an undergraduate course in the Faculty of Agricultural Science: Food, Culture, and Society. I am full of anticipation and at the same time somewhat nervous. All the typical questions are called forth: Will I provide enough context? Will I be sensitive to the learning possibilities? Will I adequately convey to students the relevance of poetry, cinema, literature, and personal experience in a class about food, culture, and society? These questions expose my insecurities, anxieties, fears, hopes, dreams, and desires. The energy I feel at the prospect of teaching reveals my pleasure of education and educational experiences. I take all of who I am into these experiences and in hermeneutic fashion, I am changed in the process of interpreting the events that unfold.

During this first class, I read aloud from a new chapbook of poetry by Rishma Dunlop, The Blue Hour (2004). The poem is called “Metropolis” and it recounts a scene in Toronto of a pregnant street-teen receiving a mandarin orange from a Loblaw customer. We (the listeners) are offered an image of the young woman biting urgently into that orange, ‘watching’ as the juices flow down her chin. After I read the poem, I ask if students have experienced eating a mandarin orange and everyone answers, “Yes.” Then I ask them to describe their experience of eating a mandarin as compared to how they imagined the young woman eating hers (this question is itself leading the students to consider difference). Several responded that they never really bite into a mandarin, but carefully peel it and eat it section by section. I ask the students what this particular image evoked for them. They respond that since she is pregnant and living on the street, she must be incredibly hungry; she doesn’t even notice that her orange peelings have dropped to the concrete. We talk about this young woman like she is real and she is. The poet has articulated her into our midst.

We also talk about this young, hungry woman like she is Other (not us) and therefore removed from our location in a university classroom. We don’t talk about how she could be any one of us under different circumstances or life events. We don’t talk about our linked subjectivities, except when I casually agree that hunger during pregnancy is quite unlike any hunger I’ve ever experienced—the kind that can wake you from a deep sleep, but I enjoy the privilege of food security; my hunger is fleeting.
What we don’t say, where our conversations don’t dare venture is possibly more important to our socio-cultural understanding of food than what we do say in this pedagogical moment and many others that might follow.

Subjectivity, Language, and Silence

When I read over my interpretations of this pedagogical encounter, I wonder where it was that I might have gone in that conversation. What might I have done differently? What did that conversation reveal about “who I am?” I consider the pedagogical impression of acknowledging human experience as fundamentally dialogical. We define and understand ourselves and our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities others want to recognize in us; that the self is defined and lives in terms of its relations with others (Eakin, 1999; Taylor, 1991). Any conversation I perform with language and emotion may suitably be my response to what many academics are calling a crisis of representation. Personal writing is an ethical act, one that requires implicit trust in the self and the reader. It is an act of letting go, releasing; one in which I am blinded to my rationality, yet guided through by my senses, my emotion, and my vision. As such, my writing about my identity within the culture of dietetics (including the academic culture) is never autonomous and my musings and reflections on educational practice are continuously reconstituted through language and art, spoken or unspoken.

…words that disobey silence…

conversazione: Italian; a meeting for conversation especially about art, literature, or science

dialectic: from feminine of dialektikos of conversation; discussion and reasoning by dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation; the tension or opposition between two interacting forces or elements

Instead of being the intermediary of the conversation, such that all student contributions were filtered through me, I might have encouraged dialogue about the issue between the students themselves by saying something like, “Julia, how do you make sense of what Jason says given your understanding of that line in the poem?” This question might have better enabled us to explore more deeply the notion of identity, difference, and diversity because it would have permitted us to begin to understand the “background against which our tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense” (Taylor, 1991, 34). The making and sustaining of our identity remains dialogical, the conversations we have with each other in class, with the poet’s words, with the pregnant teen, help us understand who we are and where we are coming from. A conversazione could enable us to collectively explore the different views we hold and the emergent tensions between our multiple perspectives — dialectic. These are significant conversations; they are risky and personal, much is at stake, but mostly our understanding of notions of difference, originality, and the acceptance of diversity. I might have done that today in class, but I did not.

Perhaps one reason I did not enter that generative realm of conversation is due to my previous training and experience as a dietitian. A dietitian is typically positioned (by regulatory bodies and professional associations) as “the trusted expert on nutrition issues” (Dietitians of Canada, 1997). We see those who “seek” our services as “patients or clients.” These individuals’ needs are seen as dependencies, not strengths. Our authority comes from power-over, thus our expressions of wonder and vulnerability are actively discouraged. We place an emphasis on fixing problems, not fostering relationships. Bella and colleagues (in press) have found that “dietitians appear to share a belief, even a professional ideology, that if information drawn from their domain of expertise is presented in the context of scientific “proof,” their “clients,” whether individual patients or members of the public, will comply with prescribed diets and correct their “bad” eating habits. All of these attributes conspire to increase the possibility of Othering in dietetic practice. Harm has been done to the Other and thus, to ourselves through our reliance and unquestioning acceptance of these professional attributes. In sum, these qualities constitute a dietitian performativity and dietetic education, while not considered solely responsible for generating these attributes, might operate to sustain or amplify their effects (Gingras, 2006).
In engaging with autoethnography, evocative and reflexive self-writing from within the culture of dietetics, I call for a renegotiation of what counts as dietetic epistemology. I share pedagogical encounters and practice a reflexive turn through the asking of “Who am I?” I desire my ‘doing’ (performativity) emerges from ‘being’ (subjectivity), not from fixed notions of “what” a dietitian is as defined by regulatory bureaucracies. In writing of such adventures, there is a potential to disrupt and expand nutrition discourse. Dietitian performativity initiated through arts-based, poetic discourse begs the question of what it means to be human while endeavouring to embrace the joys, complexities, and contradictions that are dietetic education and practice.

Evocative Reflexive Autoethnography

My hope in reliving teaching and learning experiences is that I may be more fully attuned to the possibilities as they arise in the next (as yet unrealized) pedagogical moment. The presentation and re-presentation of my self in this text is significant because I am inextricably bound up with my subject (Krieger, 1991). The reflexive process with which I have just engaged is one essential aspect of my research methodology because it permits me to see more clearly what is going on. Like others (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Krieger, 1991; Neumann & Peterson, 1997; Richardson, 1992; Smith, 1987), my central claim in respecting reflexivity is that when I discuss others, I am discussing myself; my theories of how others act and what they are like are theories about myself; the external world becomes known through me and even though I attempt to convey an understanding of a social process (dietetic education), most of what I know is (and will be) of myself. Therefore, it becomes my ethical imperative to acknowledge my self in my work, to share my identity, plus the identities of others, and to be open to the learning (of my self and the external world) that follows.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) claim “we need a form that will allow readers to feel the moral dilemmas, think with our story instead of about it, join actively in the decision points that define an autoethnographic project and consider how their own lives can be made a story worth telling” (735). Evocative, reflexive autoethnography where the researcher’s self is explored alongside other participants within the same culture provides such a form. Wear (1997) explains that “personal theorizing can be a transformative agent of social change when it is] woven together with other critical projects that bring to light codified, ritualized, and often unquestioned practices” (6). Evocative, reflexive ethnography “showing characters embedded in the complexities of lived moments of struggle… attempting trying to preserve or restore the continuity and coherence of life’s unity in the face of unexpected blows of fate that call one’s meanings and values into question” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, 744) is an especially apt approach to the research of dietetic practice considering it is a site of multiple and complex meanings—mostly thin, able, white female bodies, positioned subordinately in medical hierarchies, sustained by corporeal/cultural expressions, and complicated by infinite food politics. This is a moral, ethical undertaking and understatedly, highly delicate work. “The challenge lies in what each of us chooses to do when we represent our experiences. Whose rules do we follow? Will we make our own? Do we…have the guts to say, ‘You may not like it, but here I am’?” (Krieger, 1991, 244).

One such practice-based issue in dietetics is hunger and the associated experience of food insecurity. How are we as a profession that has been virtually silent on issues of class, race, and gender equipped to advocate to an end of hunger? There are many disempowering silences among those in our profession regarding the underlying issues of food insecurity. It is not puzzling to me that as a gendered profession hungry for visibility and recognition within a medical health hierarchy, but without a theoretical grounding in issues of race, class, and gender, we have yet to see any real change in levels of food insecurity among children, women, and families, especially among First Nations people who experience three times the food insecurity compared with non-Aboriginal households (Statistics Canada, 2004). Optimistically, we have recently been able to articulate a “position” on household food insecurity (Power, 2005), but our collective inaction as a group touted as food and
nutrition professionals is curious.

As educators of future professionals, where do we offer a critical analysis of issues related to poverty, health inequities, and social policies? How do students learn of such things when their educators have a limited poetic and/or critical social discourse to offer classroom conversations? In Power’s (2005) position paper, she invites members of the profession to be reflexive (among other recommended actions), which she defines as understanding how “social position (a product of, income, education, gender, profession, etc) and the power and privilege that accompany being a health professional affect [our] opinions, everyday practices, and perspectives on the world” while also acknowledging how our “clients’ social positions affect theirs, and the reasons that [our] perspectives and theirs may differ” (46). This is a radical call to action for our profession, thus a subversive invitation; one that provides the inspired backdrop for this paper.

Critical Imagery & Walking Around Unwritten

![Image by Jacqui Gingras](image.png)

My arts practice-based method engages text along with image. Poems inspired by pressing practice dilemmas and injustices were inscribed on ceramic tiles then baked, broken, and rearranged into another image; a female goddess figure cradling a child. I attempted to explore in my art-making the possibility of a critical image where dietetic practice was
scrutinized in alterity; a pointed question regarding the absence of the feminine, feminism, and poetics in traditional medicalized nutrition discourse.

Borkhuis (2002) suggests an interpretation of the critical image that refuses to reduce the image to the word, but instead forms “a bridge between language and silence, the visible and the invisible, the presentable, and the unrepresentable…to [offer paradoxically] work of heightened awareness that refuses either to be engulfed by a totalizing unity or divided into a static dualism” (128). Thus, the image is crucial in that it reflects a bridge between the flow of thought and imagination, language and silence. The image also offers a heightened awareness of my identity as that which is in dialogic negotiation with you the reader through text and image; here I am.

The interpretation of silence that I invoke is a language of being, a patient listening, a word-less discourse of hope and wonder (van Manen, 2002). McNiff (1996) explores silence as quintessential to human understanding and describes a methodology of listening that is undertaken holistically as a “mixture of gesture, inspired guesswork, experience, and striving to be at one with the other” (4). Silence creates a space for listening where the unspoken is heard and mutually valued. There are times when silence is our most articulate response. Hearing the unsaid requires trust, empathy, and immediacy; it assumes an acknowledgement of the unknowable/spiritual world and it privileges knowing through emotion (Tomaselli, 2003).

Calkins (as quoted in Jardine & Rinehart, 2003) describes silence as “walking around unwritten” and makes connections to the ecological crises our world is facing. The authors poeticize that “It is the walking around unwritten that allows rich integrities of our experience to come forward free of the discursive swirling of human intent. It is the walking around unwritten that leads to a deep mindfulness of the gifts of the Earth” (Jardine & Rinehart, 2003, 83). The unscribed moment of silence holds profound possibilities for greater understanding of the Other.

Silence as I mean to denote it here does not include the ‘silencing’ indicative of an encompassing structure of social control. Although a very important facet of silence, this is one taken up critically by DeVault (1999). With this in mind, Rich (2001) suggests that “…silence is not always or necessarily oppressive, it is not always or necessarily a denial or extinguishing of some reality. It can be fertilizing, it can bathe the imagination, it can, as in great open spaces…be the nimbus of a way of life, a condition of vision” (150). It is this articulation of silence I hope to awaken through my arts practice-based conversation.

Subjectivity & Poetry

Does the word ‘identity’ best denote all of which I am concerned? No. Subjectivity, according to Lupton (1996), may be used instead of ‘identity’ to more fully describe “the manifold ways in which individuals understand themselves in relation to others and experience their lives” (13). Lupton (1996) makes this distinction between subjectivity and identity claiming that subjectivity is a less rigid term and it

…incorporates the understanding that the self, or more accurately, selves, are highly changeable and contextual, albeit within certain limits imposed by the culture in which an individual lives, including power relations, social institutions and hegemonic discourse. (13)

This particular interpretation of identity, that the self is not unified, monolithic, or unencumbered, is of particular relevance to me as I explore my own multiplicity of subjectivities; woman, scholar, dietitian, mother, lesbian, educator, activist, poet…But more than labels of “who I am,” I need to understand “how I am” in the varied contexts of my life and how I articulate my subject-positions through language and discourse. I choose the word ‘subjectivity’ as more completely describing my fragmented, layered inner lives.

I am especially curious about how my discourse (namely my nutrition discourse) is revealed in conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions. I choose poetry as a means
for articulating these subjectivities (and for disrupting historically rigid nutrition discourse) because “poetry commends itself to multiple and open readings in ways conventional sociological prose does not” (Richardson, 1992, 126). As Rich (1993) claims, “We go to poetry because we believe it has something to do with us. We also go to poetry to receive the experience of the not me, enter a field of vision we could not otherwise apprehend” (85). Lorde (1984) suggests, “The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experience of our daily lives” (37). Dunlop (2002) agrees that

All art begins in the locations where certainty ends. Poetry begins here, deeply rooted in the ambiguities, blood rememberings, human obsessions and desires that cannot embody ethics, but may be capable of measures of truth...the place in which a poem begins, this is a dark margin, ambiguous, born of the imagination...” (fifth section, para. 1).

Poetry is a seductive form conducive to troubling certainty and well suited for an exploration of subjectivity within the culture of dietetics—a conversation between science and art in languages ready to be betrayed in translation. Richardson (1997) contends that the poet and her art enable us to “…lay claim to a science that is aesthetic, moral, ethical, moving, rich, and metaphoric as well as avant-garde, transgressing, and multivocal” (16, original emphasis). This is the science I claim for my profession; a feminist imaginary of the possible or what Heidegger (1971) refers to when he speaks of “the abyss of the world [that] must be experienced and endured. But for this it is necessary that there be those who reach into the abyss” (92).

The abyss is a significant metaphor for arts practice-based methods and for poetics in the dietetics profession. Poets are called to reach into the abyss, which is described by Caputo (1993) as the gap to be crossed between the universal and the idiosyncratic, between the general and the singular, between what is to be done and the here and now. This gap may also be a vast source of silence from which the “ghost of undecidability” raises like a spectre when we are confronted with proceeding into the abyss as poets, as scholars, and as educators. Other challenges to presenting subjectivity in poetic forms include the accusation that these representations lack scholarly objectivity and rigour. I find Heidegger (1971) again especially thoughtful in his address of such concerns.

But there would be, and there is, the sole necessity by thinking our way soberly into what...poetry says, to come to learn what is unspoken. That is the course of the history of Being. If we reach and enter that course, it will lead thinking into a dialogue with poetry, a dialogue that is of the history of Being. Scholars of literary history inevitably consider that dialogue to be an unscientific violation of what such scholarship takes to be the facts. Philosophers consider the dialogue to be a helpless aberration into fantasy. But destiny pursues its course untroubled with all of that. (96)

The dialogue that pursues its course between a poet, her poetry, and the witness(es) is a sacred conversation, sacra conversazione. Through the creation of this arts practice-based endeavour, I seek to explore inarticulate spaces, subjectivities, and myriad contradictions associated with this time of my life. These education-rooted conversations are often risky and tense, and even though difficult, they are not something that need fixing (Jardine, 1998). This is a work of witness. In The Life of Poetry, Rukeyser (1996) claims that “the reality of the artist is the reality of the witnesses” and she chooses ‘witness’ deliberately for its “overtone of responsibility” (175).

Much of my desire to enter this process arises from a sense of responsibility to my own vocation; I feel obligated to witness myself and interrogate my practice. My hope for my scholarly work is to “challenge the guiding assumptions of the [dietetics] culture, to raise fundamental questions regarding contemporary social life, to foster reconsideration of that which is ‘taken for granted,’ and to thereby furnish new alternatives for social action [through dietetic education]” (Gergen, 1982, 136). As Smith (1993) asserts, autobiography
can be an effective means for ‘talking back’ to those discourses that have been historically assigned and thus provide a means for disrupting guiding assumptions.

**Practice-Based?**

Lather (1991) points out that all research, even emancipatory or critical research, represents forms of knowledge and discourse that are inventions about the researchers. All research, she insists, also represents definitions, categorizations, and classifications of the researchers themselves. All forms of research “elicit the Foucauldian question: how do practices to discover the truth about ourselves impact on our lives?” (Lather, 1991, 167). Practices to discover the truth about ourselves play out in our relationships with each other. These practices are revealing and humbling to me as an educator and once I make them public by sharing them in conversations like the one I engage with here, they expose something of who I am as a dietetic educator, my professional work.

As in the opening vignette, I have questions about the way we do things in dietetic education and practice. I wonder how we speak of and speak with each other in classrooms and on the street. In speaking of the change that is required in the dietetic curriculum, Puckett (1997) states that there is a need for “social studies that deal with a variety of cultures; ethnic and religious groups; philosophies; psychology; counseling, teaching, and educational skills” (253). This is an ambitious list and problematically assumes that any knowing enables learners to “deal with” people in an objectified way, which is all too common in dietetic discourse (Austin, 1999; Travers, 1995).

As important is the breadth of knowing represented by this inventory, it speaks of the yawning gap in dietetic curriculum where instructors and co-learners (students) explore subjectivity, difference, and diversity; the synergetic knowing that demands a response, an interpersonal encounter. “Synergetic knowledge making also admits the unruly, private, and ideological dimensions of personal theorizing, theorizing that turns back on itself by analyzing its own production” (Wear, 1997, 8).

When we open the classroom conversation to the personal and political conversation that inevitably shapes our curriculum, we venture into the abyss, face the tremulous ghost, and tentatively engage the overlooked episteme, the emotionality, and politicality of our food work. Continuing to not do so may leave dietetic graduates disillusioned and desiring to leave the profession (Gingras, 2006; Puckett, 1997). “One has to admit to influencing one’s work with an inner life that is often unknowable, or poorly known, but that is nonetheless critical to how one comprehends the world” (Krieger, 1991, 112). Hence my claim that this be an inquiry grounded in who I am, in my practice as a dietitian/educator/scholar, and therefore intrinsically practice-based.

**Conversations in Contingency**

This work is personal, political, and once shared enters a social dimension; an in-between conversation “where claims against political order are made in the name of justice” (Forché, 1993, p. 31). Forché explains that the poetry of witness resists false attempts at unification and that is also my endeavour. This particular ethic may present my greatest challenge given that most of my educational experiences to date were grounded in the scientific tradition where knowledge is considered cumulative, unified, and linear. We have yet to take up race, class, and gender through an examination of how our blinding whiteness, privilege, and female gender aids in a dietetic performativity that can be described as apolitical and objective, but which is only a marker for unexamined complicity and perpetuation of healthism, food insecurity, and abject food politics.

Our possibility for change is astonishing. The act of studying “diverse women’s lives as sources of their research epistemologies leads us to consider how a field’s previous epistemological weavings may shift and change, or simply come undone, as new and divergent lives come to spin its intellectual core” (Neumann & Peterson, 1997, 3). As I pursue inquiry into alternative ways of understanding myself and my practice, it remains
pursue inquiry into alternative ways of understanding myself and my practice, it remains my task to resist the tendency towards positivism and mastery, to share stories, and be open to shifting epistemologies. These are the moments when one moves unfettered and begins to see. We are called to remember that “The reflexive qualities of human communication should not be bracketed in the name of science” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, 743). Instead, in art and language, I seek a tender dialectic, a hermeneutic turn, a sacra conversazione.

It is the start of my second year as a junior faculty member at a mid-sized, but emergent urban university. I am about to begin a lecture on “Thinking About Diversity and Valuing the Other” for one hundred first-year Nutrition and Food students in our program. Many of the same feelings of excitement and nervous anticipation arise in me as before. I take a deep breath in preparation for beginning to speak.

As an instructor in this course, I enjoy the extravagance of team-teaching with four sister dietitians. I had never participated in team-teaching prior to my time at Ryerson, and now I believe that collaborative pedagogy enlivens the course and the students’ learning experiences as indicated by their own feedback. The instructors take turns introducing wide-ranging concepts like health, identity, ethics, change, and diversity during the lecture and then we facilitate smaller group conversations around those concepts during the two-hour seminars that follow later in the week.

Today it is my turn. What’s more, my senior colleague is sitting in the back row, pen poised to offer me a teaching evaluation. Much is at stake. I take another deep breath.

I move from behind the exceedingly large podium to face the class and begin to speak. I resist starting with a definition of “difference,” since I believe this could diminish the difference this incredibly culturally-diverse group of mostly women live everyday. Instead I begin with an admission of feeling apprehensive. I speak about my passion for words and language and my curiosity of where words come from and what emotions they evoke in us. I share with these students and my teaching peers that words are exceedingly powerful and I admit to a grave responsibility in finding the “right words” to speak of diversity and the Other; I desire to offer words that will inspire, provoke, or affirm an ethics of diversity among and between us.

Reading from my notes, I say “Reimer Kirkham (2003) tells us that: ‘The power of language must not be underestimated as a colonizing force that prescribes modes of communication and meaning and inscribes social identity and belonging’ (768). There exists always a potential to use language to exclude, marginalize, or otherwise diminish. How might that experience mark our own identity if we come to know ourselves through another?” I leave that question lingering while I return to the podium and bring forth the first slide I have chose for this lecture. I take a deep breath. I feel less nervous after acknowledging my apprehension and now I am eager to venture further into conversation and learning together.

The first slide is an image—a critical image?—of a large group of people. I ask the students to examine closely that image and think about what diversity is represented there. They nimbly share what they see; visible differences in skin colour, size, gender, age, and possibly ability. Then I ask what differences they think might exist, but which are not visible. After a brief pause, an intrepid student offers “Religion or Spiritual Belief.” Another student volunteers, “Socioeconomic Status.” I wait for more. No one speaks. I ask rhetorically, “What can we discern about these people’s relationship status, sexual orientation, or health? How do we see difference? How do we learn to see difference?”

I continue to share ideas about the connection between identity and difference, emphasizing that we learn of ourselves in relation to each other. I offer several definitions of “Othering” while reminding the group that differences between us are
an ethical resource of the greatest magnitude. In learning of the other through their stories, poems, and art, we learn of ourselves, and we imbibe in an interpersonal encounter that can flavour our ethical work as future nutrition and food professionals.

I ask the students to look around the room at each other; what differences do they see among us as a group? There is laughter since it is blatantly obvious that there is more sameness represented in the room than difference. Most of the students (and the entire teaching team) are women; we are a highly gendered profession. I ask the students to consider why that might be. Several hands shoot up, longing for recognition. One student says, “Traditionally, food has been seen as women’s work. That’s why mostly women enter this field.” Another student glibly speaks out, “Some guys might think it’s gay to be in nutrition.”

My heart skips a beat and my mind blanks. I can only hear everyone waiting for my response, but all I can manage is, “Hmmm.” I hold my breath as I retreat to the podium.

In a flash, I think back to conversations with my gay male dietitian colleague. I remember him sharing with me his theories on why there did seem to be a preponderance of gay men practicing dietetics; an over-representation of gays compared with the general population, to be sure. Other thoughts rush the void, the abyss of my mind and my heart races in earnest, as I look upward to see my senior colleague intently peering down from the back of the lecture theatre. Is that a bemused expression on her face? She lowers her pen and resumes writing with a flourish.

Here we are becoming. All theory stands in abeyance as I live with these students as knowing and sensing co-learners.

I do eventually mumble something like there does indeed seem to be more gays in our profession, but that we lack some certain evidence of how many and why.

Slippage.

The reductionist, empiricist discourse resurfaces and I am left bewildered by my sheer lack of imagination.

I can think of so many responses in retrospect, but there and then, that was all.

I continued on to introduce the concept of healthism, “…the preoccupation with personal health as a primary—often the primary—focus for the definition and achievement of well-being” (Crawford, 1980, 368). I show a slide that states, “Healthism denies that differences in gender, economic, and cultural resources exist to preclude good health.” I suggest that economic restraint coupled with an unquenchable hunger for increasing profit margins (read: capitalism) in health care has the potential to incite Othering among and horizontally between health care workers; a certain type of violence.

Before I ask the students to share stories of how they “arrived” in this program and thus, privilege story as means for coming to know each other, I mention that the politics of belonging are revealed to be complex and often contradictory; it becomes our professional responsibility to listen and care for each other in that listening. I quote, “As we listen, intimately, to someone’s story, we are drawn into the unique reality of that individual, helping us to see the world through experience, rather than through theorizing” (Sorrell & Dinkins, 2006, 313) and I offer a final question to be taken up in our seminar conversations: “What are the ways that you can encourage and listen to the narratives shared by yourselves and Others?”

Later, during a moment of quiet reflection, I wonder if the students see the irony
revealed in my own inconsistencies and contradictions. Like my first story, I wonder how I might have responded differently to the student’s remark about being or becoming gay. I wished I had asked her a clarifying question: “When you say, ‘… it’s gay to be in nutrition…’ do you mean ‘gay’ in the derogatory way or do you mean it as a legitimate sexual orientation? Why do you think that stereotype exists, if it is true? How does that perspective shape our professional identity? How might queer dietetic students respond to this claim?”

After reading an article from Toynton (2007) regarding his findings that “the stereotyping of gay sensibility, anti-science prejudice, classism and fundamentalist constructivism” (593) have resulted in alienating queer science students, I begin to consider “queering the dietetic curriculum” to increase the safety and visibility of queer dietetic students and professionals.

This idea brings a smile to my face as I wonder about the historical contributions queer dietitians and nutritionists have offered our profession; surely an interesting path of inquiry for next year’s lecture. I learned that the topic of “Thinking About Diversity and Valuing the Other” is a rich, contingent, and necessary conversation, “…uncovering, naming, and confronting those public scripts that say certain people do not belong” (Reimer Kirkham, 2003, 776).

The tender dialectic is one I continue to find myself engaged in—even as I reel from the comments my senior colleague has put forward in my teaching evaluation (reflection forthcoming). Who am I, but “at all times perceiving/all arts, all senses being languages/delivered of will, being transformed in truth” (Rukeyser, 1978, 303)? Who am I to tell the truth, to listen heart-fully, to walk around unwritten, and to risk living poetically; unabashedly, artfully, humbly poetic?

Resources


About the Author

**Jacqui Gingras**, is an Assistant Professor at Ryerson University’s School of Nutrition in Toronto. Her current preoccupations involve theoretical and experiential explorations of health epistemology and what “counts” as knowledge in food and
nutrition practice. She has a particular interest in how food and nutrition knowledge is constituted, legitimized, and communicated through power and discourse in anticipation of individual/population behaviour change. Her doctoral research, a reflexive autoethnographic fiction on how dietetic subjectivity, performativity, and curricula shape a collective understanding of food, weight, and health, was awarded the 2006 Ted Aoki Prize for Outstanding Dissertation in Curriculum Studies. Her research engages autoethnographic, phenomenological, and arts-informed movements as a means for situated and particular understandings of dietetic theory, education, and practice.