

SHAPE SHIFTERS: EXPLORING IDENTITIES IN SPACE, PLACE, AND TIME

In a world marked by rapid changes, where identities are frequently contested and redefined, the concept of shapeshifting has become increasingly relevant. As Gee (2004) suggests, shapeshifting extends beyond the realm of science fiction; it is a metaphor for the adaptive strategies individuals employ to navigate social, political, and economic landscapes. For those from historically marginalized communities, shapeshifting is not just an ability, but a necessity. These individuals are often required to reconfigure their identities, strategically deploying skills and attributes to survive and thrive in environments not designed for them.

This special theme issue of *The Educational Justice Journal* seeks to explore the multidimensional nature of shapeshifting, particularly through the lens of identity development within contested spaces and across time. Drawing on the works of Bourdieu (1986) and Yosso (2005), we examine how cultural and social capital play pivotal roles in who is afforded the ability to shapeshift, and who is systematically denied that capacity due to racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, and other intersecting forms of discrimination.

Historically, the identities of minoritized individuals have been shaped by external forces seeking to categorize and control them. However, the act of shapeshifting allows for resistance against these forces. It involves the careful negotiation of multiple identities to navigate oppressive structures while maintaining one's core sense of self. This issue responds to calls by scholars like McKittrick (2006) and Tuck and McKenzie (2015) to further unpack how space, place, and time intersect with identity. The authors in this issue challenge traditional understandings of identity by revealing how dynamic and fluid identities can be within shifting environments.

About the Guest Editors

Kala Burrell-Craft, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the Educational Leadership program at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore where she co-leads the School of Education college-wide initiatives centered on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion as a member of the university JEDI committee and sits on various university and college committees. She also serves as a board member with AABHE where she is co-chair of the research committee. Her research interests are related to identity development, educational spaces (urban and rural), antiracist teacher and leadership preparation (culturally responsive pedagogy), critical literacies (CRT), and social justice.

Dr. Burrell-Craft has multiple publications in peer-reviewed journals and has been awarded over eight million dollars in grants. She has been a member of AABHE since 2018 where she received third place for the dissertation award. She is a graduate of the Leadership and Mentoring Institute (LMI) Class of 2022, the award recipient of the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education's 2024 Early Career Award, the award recipient of the 2022 American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's Best Practice for Multicultural Education and Diversity award, and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She also serves on the American Educational Research Association's executive board for the Research Focus on Black Education SIG and co-chair of Division G's Section 3 that focuses on Language, literacies, and representations.

John A. Williams III, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Urban Education at Texas A&M University at College Station, in the department of Teaching, Learning and Culture. He received his undergraduate degree in Sociology and masters in Education Policy at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. His doctorate is in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis on Urban Education from The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His research focuses on developing and replicating best practices, policies, and personnel to dismantle inequitable discipline outcomes for Black students in K-12 school environments. Dr. Williams has spent time working with teachers, school district administration, juvenile justice practitioners and community members across the country, to de-silo how we support Black children as critically conscious learners. Dr. Williams has multiple publications in peer-reviewed journals such as the Journal of Negro Education, Teacher and Teacher Education, Urban Education Research and Policy Annuals, Education Policy, and the Journal of Urban Education. Lastly, he is the founder and director of ULTRA, the Urban Lab for Transformative Research and Assessment.

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I am a graduating senior at Loyola University New Orleans studying psychology with a minor in sociology. I am from Glen Burnie, Maryland and I have aspirations of being a Clinical Child Psychologist.

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I am a graduating senior at Howard University, studying biology with a minor in chemistry from Charlotte, North Carolina with aspirations of becoming a dermatologist specializing in skin of color. Along with that, I am a 4-year member of the Ooh La La! Danceline with the Howard University S.H.O.W.T.I.M.E Marching Band.

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I am a senior at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro studying sociology and psychology with the plan of being a sports counselor. Along with being a student, I work as an assistant store manager at Autobell Car Wash and have a dog.

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Zachary Z. Robinson is a senior at Louisiana State University. He is pursuing a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with minors in Psychology, Political Science, and Women Gender and Sexuality Studies. After graduation, Zachary hopes to attend graduate school.

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With 14 years of experience in higher education, she began her career as a therapist, focusing on birth order and lifestyle assessments to guide career and life coaching. She later developed holistic student support departments for online master's programs, demonstrating increased retention by integrating advising, career, and social work services. Her role as Dean of Students has since expanded to overseeing multiple student support offices, aimed at closing the achievement gap through an approach that combines intrusive and holistic advising.

Vernajh Pinder

Mr. Pinder is a Doctoral Student in the Educational Leadership program at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. He holds a Master's in Education with a focus on School Counseling and a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management. In October 2019, he released his debut book, *Hope You Don't Get Famous: Poetry and Prose*. He followed this with *Sometimes Superheroes Need Saving Too* in June 2023 and contributed to the anthology *Deviant: Chronicles of Pride* in June 2020. Originally from Nassau, Bahamas, he is also a proud member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.

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Dr. Cardwell is a K-12 educator, adjunct professor, and the founder of Girls Achieving Personal Success (G.A.P.S.), a mentoring program for minority girls. Dr. Cardwell's research interests include critical autoethnography, resilience theory and self-affirmation theory.

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Dr. Patrón-Vargas is an assistant professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture. She received a dual doctorate from Michigan State University with a focus on Curriculum and Instruction and Chicano/Latino Studies. Her broader scholarly agenda is focused on examining issues related to race, ethnicity, gender, and education.

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Virginia Redwine Johnson, a Ph.D. student in Teaching, Learning and Culture at Texas A&M, researches teacher dispositions and factors supporting culturally inclusive teaching in urban classrooms. She has served as an officer for Bold Leaders in Urban Education and recently published a collaborative autoethnography on systemic disservice to Black teachers.

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Salandra Grice-Johnson, Ph.D., is a former classroom educator, award-winning author, and currently an Assistant Professor of Education at Sam Houston State University. She is also the founder of Conscious Education Consulting, LLC and Conscious Educators for Equity, a 501(c)(3). Her scholarly contributions focus on culturally responsive and equity-based teacher preparation.

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Alexes M. Terry, M.Ed, has over a decade of experience in education. She is a Senior Professorial Lecturer for American University and a Director of Clinical Faculty for City Teaching Alliance. She is pursuing a Doctorate of Education in Curriculum & Instruction with a passion for urban education.

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Elissa West-Frazier, EdD is an education researcher, educator, and consultant. She brings extensive experience with district-level professional training for teachers around improving school systems and student outcomes. Currently, she partners with Loyola University Chicago's School of Education.

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Maiya A. Turner, Ph.D, is a former classroom educator and researcher in urban education in the Multicultural Education Program at Texas A&M University. Her research agenda centers Black educators and their retention and recruitment into the teaching profession to diversify the teacher workforce.

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Dr. Jovan T. Thomas is a native of Thibodaux, Louisiana. Dr. Thomas received his Bachelors of Science degree in Public Health from Dillard University, a Master of Social work degree from Southern University New Orleans, and Education Specialist degree from Louisiana State University, and he earned his Doctorate of Philosophy degree in Educational Leadership and Research with a concentration in Higher Education Administration from Louisiana State University. At Southern University and A&M College, Dr. Thomas is the Interim Dean for University College and adjunct instruction. Dr. Thomas' research interest are student access and achievement, equity and diversity, student learning and development, and mentoring.

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Dr. Anissa Guerin, a native of Hammond, Louisiana, earned her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership & Research with a concentration in Higher Education Administration from Louisiana State University. As an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University-Commerce, her research focuses on the academic achievement of minority women in STEM, women leaders in higher education, and DEI initiatives in higher education.

ArCasia D. James-Gallaway, PhD - Texas A&M University

ArCasia D. James-Gallaway is a proud first-generation college graduate, native Texan, and interdisciplinary historian of education, whose work bridges past and present perspectives on African Americans' struggle for educational justice. Her research agenda follows three overlapping strands of inquiry: the history of African American education, racialized power in history education, and gendered (anti)Blackness in education. She is the recent recipient of the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education's 2024 Early Career Award of Merit. Dr. James-Gallaway's scholarship has been supported by the Ford Foundation, American Educational Research Association, Texas State Historical Association, Baylor University, and Texas A&M University.

Chaddrick D. James-Gallaway, PhD - Texas A&M University

A proud community college alumnus, Chaddrick D. James-Gallaway, PhD, is a sociologist of education who primarily examines (anti)Blackness, race, racism, and the racialized experiences of Students of Color across P-20 educational contexts. Advancing critical race discourse analysis, he is a qualitative researcher and critical race theorist, who investigates how racism impacts cross-racial interactions and critical geographies of race. Recently elected Chair of the American Educational Research Association's special interest group, Sociology of Education, Dr. James-Gallaway has published in leading journals, including *Teachers College Record*, *Human Communication Research*, *Educational Policy*, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, and *Race Ethnicity and Education*.

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Dr. Richard Warren Jr., 2019 Maryland State Teacher of the Year, is a Professor of Education and Director of the UMES Men of Color in Education Program. Specializing in teacher preparation, recruitment, and retention, he advocates for equitable classrooms, transformative leadership, and advancing diverse educators, particularly males of color.

Domino Williams - Howard University

Domino Williams is an undergraduate freshman honors Physics major with an Astrophysics concentration at Howard University. She is a double-minor in secondary education and computer science. Her research aspirations include stellar and black hole physics. She strives to earn her Ph.D. in Astrophysics and intends to teach physics and astronomy to high schoolers.

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Matthew Alexander Williams MBA, MPA, PMP, CSM is a Senior Principal Architect in IT, specializing in strategic planning and enterprise organizational design. He leads all design efforts for hardware delivery and engineering teams. By aligning technology solutions with business goals, he drives operational maturity through deliberate planning, execution, and architectural oversight.

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