“The Test Was Like, I Own You!”:
Coping with the Emotional Stress of Teacher Licensure Exams

This presentation is about the stories people tell themselves in order to cope with the stress of high-stakes test. The people in this case are preservice teachers. The test, teacher licensure exams. Drawing from material in my recently published book, Navigating Teacher Licensure Exams: Success and Self-Discovery on the High-Stakes Path to the Classroom (Routledge, 2019), I’ll present cases that illustrate the range of ways preservice teachers narrate — or build stories around — their mostly stressful experiences with licensure exam. Some of these students passed the exam and became teachers; other did not. As such, these cases lend insights about the social and psychological contexts high-stakes tests, teacher preparation, and systemic barriers that restrict the racial diversity of the profession.

Dr. Emery Petchauer’s research has focused on the aesthetic practices of urban arts, particularly hip-hop culture, and their connections to teaching, learning and living. He is the author of “Hip-Hop Culture in College Students’ Lives” (Routledge, 2012), the first scholarly study of hip-hop culture on college campuses, and the co-editor of “Schooling Hip-Hop: Expanding Hip-Hop Based Education Across the Curriculum” (Teachers College Press, 2013). Nearly two decades of organizing and sustaining urban arts spaces across the U.S inform this scholarly work. Petchauer also studies high-stake teacher licensure exams and their relationship to the social diversity of the teaching profession, a line of inquiry that earned him the 2018 Innovations in Research on Equity and Social Justice in Teacher Education Award from the American Educational Research Association. An associate professor, Petchauer also holds a faculty appointment in the Department of English and coordinates the secondary English Education program.