CRITICAL QUESTIONS IN EDUCATION

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Special Theme Issue: Critical Inquiry for the Social Good

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Colleagues and Friends of the Academy:

Before moving onto a quick word about this special theme issue, your regular Academy update: plans are complete for our two annual meetings. The first of those, a symposium on school/student/teacher perfection is set for beautiful Salt Lake City Utah in just a few short weeks. For those readers who may have missed out on the Salt Lake City event, never fear. Our second meeting will be in New Orleans, March 6-8 of next year, and will be focused in part on the question of teaching controversial topics. Visit our web site for details.

So: why a theme issue on Critical Inquiry? And, why one focusing on "research" as a means for aiding our never-ending pursuit of a good society? The long answer is somewhat complicated and is pondered in some very substantial ways in this issue; and, in fact, in a second issue to come...yes, you read that correctly. Aaron and Austin were so successful in garnering participation on these questions, that the quality articles submitted for the project could not be contained in a single issue of the journal. Part two is scheduled to be published mid-March of next year. The short answer is not nearly so complicated. Educational research, particularly since being "redefined" in the pages of the No Child Left Behind reform legislation has, seemingly, been much less about a search for ways to make our society better, and much more about turning our children and youth into quantifiable data to be examined and prodded into perfect numeric Nirvana. When Aaron and Austin proposed this project it was certainly one that fell into the category of "no-brainer." Critically interrogating the state of current research and then providing suggestions for how research might be conducted with the social good in mind is, we believe, absolutely crucial to recovering some lost humanity in educational policy and practice. We hope (and believe) you will find the articles in this part I collection to be thought-provoking and impactful in terms of your own research into education and its relationship to a good society.

And so, we leave you to your reading with as always, our wish that you are visited with a good dose of peace.

PAX,

Eric C. Sheffield

Eric C. Sheffield, Managing Editor

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Critical Questions in Education

Special Theme Issue:
Critical Inquiry for the Social Good

Aaron Kuntz & Austin Pickup, Guest Editors

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Critical Inquiry for the Social Good: Methodological Work as a Means for Truth-Telling in Education

Aaron M. Kuntz, University of Alabama
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Abstract

This article questions the ubiquity of the term "critical" in methodological scholarship, calling for a renewed association of the term with projects concerned with social justice, truth-telling, and overt articulations of the social good. Drawing on Michel Foucault's work with parrhesia (or truth-telling) and Aristotle's articulation of phronesis (or practical knowledge), the authors situate critical inquiry as a political project of interrupting the present for a more socially-just future.

Keywords: *Truth, Parrhesia, Critical, Phronesis, Methodology*

This special issue of *Critical Questions in Education* is dedicated to new understandings of critical methodologies in education. The repetition of the descriptive term *critical* is intentional in this case as the critical question we sought to engage asks what it means to conduct critical inquiry within the realm of education. That is, how might our enacted methodologies enable or activate elements of productive change that we imagine as necessary for the future of education specifically and radical democracy more generally? More than the relation of empirical results to various policy reforms (as is often the case in discussions of educational research) we sought engaged perspectives that interrogate larger order questions regarding assumptions of knowing and being (epistemic and ontic in order) that are necessarily implicated in the very act of inquiry. Further, we asked authors to link such assumptions with considerations for social justice; radical claims that we might be other than we currently are and that education might be a viable vehicle for social change.

And yet, we wanted to begin somewhat self-consciously. Indeed, the initial idea for this issue began with our shared concern regarding the overuse and fashionable ambiguity of the term, *critical*. As has been noted in the past, the term *critical* is ubiquitous in contemporary academic scholarship, particularly in relation to philosophical and methodological work.[1] Far from noting a specific theoretical approach and/or time period (such as *critical theory*, associated with the Frankfurt School, for example), there now exist a host of approaches, conceptualizations, and techniques that share the *critical* descriptor, often without any overt connection to one another (critical geography, critical race studies, critical phenomenology, critical quantitative research, critical inquiry, are but a few of these examples).

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1. Aaron Kuntz, *The Responsible Methodologist: Inquiry, Truth-Telling, and Social Justice* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2015).

At the same time, we are not yet ready to relinquish the term in our own work or in the work of those whose scholarship we have come to admire; *critical* is a term worth sustaining. As such, we thought it important to survey the contemporary field and developed a call for articles that provokes the term *critical* specifically in relation to methodological work. What might a *critical methodology* look like given contemporary socio-political and theoretical contexts? How might it be enacted? What does it require of the *critical methodologist*? How might these engagements be different (or similar) within the various traditions of critical inquiry?

In counter-distinction to the ever-presence of *critical* distinctions, we remained similarly concerned with an apparent hesitancy to invoke terms such as *truth* and the *good* in contemporary scholarship, particularly within the field of education. Indeed, in conversations and written texts alike, scholars seem to go to extraordinary linguistic lengths to avoid claiming or otherwise uttering such terms for fear of over-essentializing or determining subjects, actions, claims (and more). Given the intersection of our contemporary moment (of neoliberalism, neoconservativism, hyper-globalization, etc) with trends in theorizations (of the posts—postmodernism, posthumanism, post-materialism, etc) we saw both a need for complex interrogations of our world *and* an overt political stance for social justice. Bringing the two together, we provocatively assert that one cannot reasonably claim criticality without an explicit orientation towards truth. In short, ours is a time for stark assertions of right and wrong—justice and injustice—as well as clear claims regarding the assumptions that link our inquiry practices with progressive social change. How is it possible, for example, to conduct *critical* inquiry in education without an overt political stance that maintains some claim regarding truth and the social good? Though this remains important in a host of disciplines and fields of study, it is particularly important in the area of education. As historically, socially, and politically constructed spaces, critical analysis of schools requires more than simplistic suggestions that these institutions are "broken." If productive critique is to occur within the field of education it must necessarily invoke a way of being other than we currently are; a provocative break with what *was* in the interest of calling forth new educational practices and engagements with the world. As such, we suggest that critical inquirers must intervene by invoking a particular orientation to truth and notions of the good; orientations which postulate a meaningful future while uprooting the problematics of the past and present.

Importantly, we situate inquiry generally—and methodological work more specifically—within two overarching philosophical concerns of *truth-telling* and *practical wisdom*. Specifically, we assert that critical work necessarily situates inquiry within an assumed responsibility for the public good: one thus engages in inquiry practices in order to promote a more socially-just society. This alignment of inquiry with social-justice work productively challenges the general use of *critical*, a term all-too-easily (and simplistically) invoked in contemporary educational discourse. To be *critical* one must work towards truth-claims that disrupt the normative flow of common-sense; critical work cannot replicate what is already known (this, of course is the central distinction between *difference* and *repetition* that forms the basis of Deleuze's [1995] text of the same name; out of difference, thinking is possible). As such, *critical inquiry* is necessarily radical, critiquing the existing status quo even as it envisions possible alternatives to the contemporary moment. This, we propose, provocatively challenges methodological work within the contemporary academy: how might inquiry be differently (and, we might say, more progressively/usefully/productively) "critical" if we begin from a notion of truth/the good (as opposed to moving away from or ignoring such notions)? This special issue is thus driven by our collective interest in how scholars might re-envision "critical work" when they have to take a stand on truth/the good.

Given our above assertions of what it means to be *critical*, much work in educational scholarship that invokes the term might be interpreted as critical in name only. "Critical" methodologies

disappointingly remain at the level of the procedural, offering only inquiry techniques as the means through which to engage in critical work. Yet, such technical formations can never intervene in the incessant production of the status quo; situated at the level of procedure they remain governed by the very rationalities that implicate our contemporary moment. Additionally, the postmodern moment, while offering a useful deconstruction of grand narratives, has perhaps left us in a state of scholarly paralysis when it comes to possibilities of repair or even renewal. Though the proliferation of "critical" scholarship within various traditions *(critical race, critical Latina/o, critical feminist, critical disability studies, etc.)* has worked to challenge existing hegemonic norms within the educational landscape, this scholarship often remains hesitant to move toward its own notions of truth or the good. But, is it enough to challenge the status quo only to find ourselves groundless? Can we move toward a critical praxis which takes on positive notions of truth and the good while still holding to contextual understandings of these same notions? What answers do the various critical traditions provide about socially-just education and how might these answers intersect or depart from one another? In response, we asked educational scholars to consider a more engaged sense of critical work, one that orients towards the production of truth-claims surrounding the common good. Critical methodologies would, in turn, establish orientations towards meaning-making that are profoundly political, challenging not simply normative claims, but the very means by which such claims are made. In this way, critical work intervenes simultaneously on epistemological and methodological levels.

This issue begins with a philosophical grounding regarding critical work as an important point of departure. To begin the discussion, we offer two overlapping orientations towards criticality and methodology: 1) Foucault's sense of *parrhesia* (or truth-telling) and 2) Aristotelian notions of *phronesis* (or practical wisdom).[2] Through overlapping *parrhesia* with *phronesis* we seek a useful means of intersecting disruptive truth-telling with a deliberative orientation towards some good; inquiry thus becomes a political project of interrupting the present for a more socially-just future.

For Foucault, truth-telling involves recognizing and speaking a truth that is not otherwise made visible by normative ways of knowing or coming to know. Thus, in order to engage in *parrhesia*, one must break from the past in order to imagine a yet-to-be-realized future. In order to do so, one must engage in truth-telling through three intersecting processes: 1) citizenship; 2) responsibility; 3) risk.[3] To begin, the truth-teller must position him/herself as a *citizen*—that is, as a recognized participant within some community. In regards to critical inquiry within the academy, this notion of citizenship asks faculty scholars to speak from their privileged position within higher education. That is, our role as faculty citizens grants us the opportunity to engage in truth-telling back to the very institution that grants us visibility. Next, the truth-teller has a *responsibility* to speak those truths that disrupt the otherwise smooth power formations that produce institutions and inform our daily practices of living. *Parrhesia* offers no space for equivocation or the convenience of silence—it is the responsibility of the truth-teller to disrupt through making such truths visible. Lastly, the truth-teller necessarily *risks* his/her relation to the very institutions that grant him/her citizenship. Thus it is that those of us who are in the field of education must necessarily recognize that our very critique might irrevocably disrupt our own positions (as methodologists,

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2. Michel Foucault, *The Courage of the Truth (The Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the College De France 1983-1984,* translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillon, 2011); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

3. Foucault, *Courage of the Truth*. What follows is a quick gloss of how parrhesia develops from specific claims for citizenship, responsibility, and risk. For a more thorough treatment of parrhesia, particularly as it relates to educational inquiry, see Kuntz, *The Responsible Methodologist*.

as professors, etc.). Indeed, how can one reimagine a new vision for education and social justice and, at the same time, maintain the status quo of institutional assignment and practice? Thus it is that *parrhesia* requires quite a bit from the truth-teller even as it remains fertile ground for the possibilities for being (and becoming) otherwise.

Similarly, *phronesis* is grounded in a deliberative judgment of the present in order to know how to act in an unforeseen future. Aristotle defines *phronesis* as a rational state of truth "concerning what is good and bad for a human being."[4] Both practical and value rationality are central to *phronesis* as it is concerned with the complexity of practical problems and the ethical deliberation needed to successfully navigate them. Importantly, *phronesis* is distinguished from truths that are grounded in epistemic or technical formulations. It concerns things which can be otherwise, or which can be deliberated about nobly in the setting of ethical discourse. Thus, *phronesis* serves as an important framework for inquiry that is committed to truth and truth-telling while recognizing the context-dependent nature of this practice in the realm of human affairs. *Phronesis* further situates discussions of *what could be* within deliberations of *what should be*.

As such, both *parrhesiastic* and *phronetic* orientations towards knowing and doing involve: an engaged analysis of the past; a recognition of how historical ways of knowing and being implicate the present; a determination to point a way forward towards a more socially-just future; a contextually grounded sense of value rationality and an explicit determination of ethical practice. Consequently, *parrhesia* and *phronesis* offer select challenges to "critical" methodological work. No longer can someone claim the critical mantle solely by critiquing what is (this would be equivalent to saying the educational system is broken, throwing one's hands up, and moving along). Instead, critical work involves a great degree of risk—requiring as it does a commitment to work for some unknown future in the name of social justice or the social good.

In the end, our deliberate call for papers resulted in such an outpouring of thoughtful, engaged scholarship that we imposed upon the journal editors to publish two issues—this current issue and another to follow in spring of 2017. The articles that make up these issues share a dedication to utilize inquiry as a means to challenge and change education. Though some are conceptual and others are empirical in order, all of the articles refuse to acquiesce to the seduction of scholarly disinterest—they, quite simply, seek social justice ends.

To this end, Austin Pickup begins this special issue by re-orienting the notion of critical work with conceptions of *praxis*. Rather than situating *praxis* within contemporary debates found in critical pedagogy, Pickup locates *praxis* within Aristotelian Ethics, linking the term with ethical debates surrounding concerns for practical wisdom (or, *phronesis*). Framing *phronesis-praxis* within ethical deliberations grants Pickup an important link to *parrhesiastic* practices of truth-telling. Thus it is that Pickup concludes that *critical* work necessarily entails virtuous acts, shifting concerns for critical research away from technical distinctions and to a sustained ethical deliberation with questions and assertions regarding truth. Through his careful work with Ancient Greek philosophy, Pickup sets the tone for the rest of the issue.

The next article, by Kakali Bhattacharya, also locates the notion of *praxis* as key to critical inquiry, though does so from a post-oppositional theoretical stance. In contrast to a tradition of oppositional practice in academic scholarship, Bhattacharya advocates for critical work that is productive; "enactments of possibilities" that simultaneously address individualized suffering and structural oppression in education. Key to Bhattacharya's article is the means by which post-oppositional approaches to inquiry align with an onto-epistemological framework that refuses the violence of separating knowing from doing. Battacharya's is a call for a radical restructuring of

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4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 107.

critical scholarship, one that situates *critical* as endlessly productive and making possible previously unimagined possibilities for social justice.

Crystal Laura next offers love as a framework for social inquiry that disrupts simplistic understandings of research as a distant process of technical procedure. She turns our attention to the human side of inquiry, noting that research involves problems that "bear on the everyday circumstances of real people." Through reflections on her own research experiences on the school-to-prison pipeline and engagements with her family, Laura suggests that intimate inquiry can reposition critically committed researchers toward personally active and politically engaged projects that challenge the contemporary push to conform to traditional academic protocol. As such, she presents us with an activist stance devoted to ethical discourse and truth-telling.

Through a specific engagement with ethnography, Sophia Rodriguez articulates a methodology of death as an extension of Deleuzoguattarian claims on philosophy-as-method and the phenomenon of the event. Through her careful considerations of youth activism in Chicago, Rodriguez offers new ways of thinking with the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari; ways that promote possibility and new birth as extensions of critical inquiry. Rodriguez's article offers the reader important interrogations of normative practices of truth-telling *and* critical efforts at intervention, situated within a philosophically-deep understanding of research-as-inquiry.

Further linking methodological considerations to truth-telling, Trevor Warburton suggests that the oft-discussed notion of researcher reflexivity in qualitative research is often absent from studies utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). He argues that CDA must better incorporate reflexive self-analysis in order to disrupt dominant discourses. Importantly, Warburton writes that researcher reflexivity is an essential form of truth-telling as the lack of self-analysis unintentionally reinforces dominant discourses. He illustrates this through sample analyses of working with social justice educators, noting that self-reflexive CDA allowed for the understanding of his own reinscription of White-centered conceptions of progressive teaching in his original analysis. Warburton's discussion is important as it furthers the understanding that critical truth-telling is an engaged dialogue with oneself and others, rather than a disengaged, technical process.

Further examining the notion of engagement in relation to critical inquiry, Brian Lozenski draws from an extended ethnographic study to situate jazz as a productive epistemological metaphor for critical participatory research. Through Jazz, Lozenski demonstrates the productive possibilities for *dissonance*, a key term in the relation between meaning-making and truth-telling. The concept of dissonance points to the necessity for discomfort in critical qualitative inquiry, drawing towards the possibilities inherent in epistemological crisis. Such disruptions, Lozenski demonstrates, have profound implications for both the practice of inquiry and teaching practices within the classroom itself.

Ezekiel Kimball similarly pulls from empirical work to better understand unique approaches to truth claims in educational inquiry. Specifically operating from a post-pragmatist epistemological lens, Kimball reveals the limitations of traditional approaches to formal theory even as he demonstrates the usefulness of theory-engaged methodology in educational research. In order to ground his analysis, Kimball points to the mechanisms by which inquiry and theory operate within the student affairs profession, a field historically dominated by prescriptions for best practices for knowing and doing. Through his study of student affairs practitioners, Kimball demonstrates how theory is utilized within daily practices, thereby demonstrating inroads for critical approaches to understanding that are not tethered to the limitations of prescription or replications of the status quo.

Next, Emily Nusbaum and Kathleen Sitter turn our attention to duoethnography. In this article, the authors explore duoethnography as both method and object of analysis. They perform

duoethnography to explore and more deeply understand their own recent encounters with it and its potential as a critical qualitative methodology in the context of normativity and ableism. Again connecting us to the theme of this issue, exploring diverse conceptions of truth-telling within critical inquiry, Nusbaum and Sitter intentionally unpack their own beliefs through the duoethnographic account, emphasizing the act of researchers engaging in dialogic encounter. This again underscores the conception of critical inquiry as an interventionist stance that incorporates oneself within the research endeavor.

Lastly, Joy Howard, Kindel Nash, Sophia Rodriguez, and Candace Thompson provide a provocative look into the methodological entanglement of critical ethnography. Through diffractive analysis and a diversity of theoretical frameworks, the authors discuss personal episodes where their researcher roles were challenged, repositioned, or reframed in conducting justice work. Specifically, they highlight the notion of *missing stories*, occasions where the traditional sense of academic scholarship is troubled by the intimacy of participant stories or the inappropriateness of working toward a singular truth. Each author recounts instances where the traditional move to represent truth through scholarship was challenged or even halted due to these entangled processes of critical engagement. This article foregrounds the notion of *risk* within not speaking, or at least not speaking within the limits of traditional academic scholarship, and thus adds a fresh contribution to understandings of methodological risk in critical inquiry.

Together, these articles offer specific and strategic interventions into the normative status quo in the name of social justice. The authors throughout this special issue refuse the all-to-easy simplification of methodology as a technocratic enterprise and, instead, situate inquiry as an engaged process of activating for a more socially just world. It is our hope that the articles in this issue challenge readers to more intentionally align their goals for an unknown future with overt claims regarding truth, truth-telling, and the ethics of working for the social good.

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Critical Inquiry as Virtuous Truth-Telling: Implications of Phronesis and Parrhesia

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Abstract

This article examines critical inquiry and truth-telling from the perspective of two complementary theoretical frameworks. First, Aristotelian phronesis, or practical wisdom, offers a framework for truth that is oriented toward ethical deliberation while recognizing the contingency of practical application. Second, Foucauldian parrhesia calls for an engaged sense of truth-telling that requires risk from the inquirer while grounding truth in the complexity of human discourse. Taken together, phronesis and parrhesia orient inquirers toward intentional truth-telling practices that resist simplistic renderings of criticality and overly technical understandings of research. This article argues that truly critical inquiry must spring from the perspectives of phronesis and parrhesia, providing research projects that aim at virtuous truth-telling over technical veracity with the hope of contributing to ethical discourse and social praxis.

Keywords: phronesis, praxis, parrhesia, critical inquiry, truth-telling

Introduction

The theme of this special issue considers the nature of critical inquiry, specifically methodological work that remains committed to explicit goals of social justice and the good. One of the central concerns of this issue is that critical studies have lost much of their meaning due to a proliferation of the term *critical* in educational scholarship. As noted in the introduction to this issue, much contemporary work in education research that claims to be critical may be so in name only, offering but methodological techniques to engage in critical work; techniques that are incapable of intervening in both the epistemological and ontological formations of normative practices in education. Additionally, the postmodern moment, with its challenge to universalizing theories of emancipatory politics common within critical studies, leaves us reticent to speak truth productively in the aim of social justice. As Kuntz has recently written, we perhaps exist in a state of scholarly paralysis relative to truth-telling where "scholars and theoreticians remain strikingly silent when it comes to their own beliefs or assertions of truth," rendering the methodologist "as nearly apolitical."[1]

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1. Aaron M. Kuntz, *The Responsible Methodologist: Inquiry, Truth-Telling, and Social Justice* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2015), 22.

If true, it seems that a situation exists where methodologists have only the ability to speak truth *through* method and technique, not *within* the material realities of social and political contexts. Critical inquiry now exhibits a disquieting inability to intervene and disrupt the status quo on a practical and theoretical level. At the heart of this scholarly impotence are the role of truth and the responsibility of the methodologist as a "truth-teller." Without the ability to perform truth-telling, recognizing this as an ethically engaged act, the methodologist loses the potential for critical work to disrupt the normative flow of contemporary knowing and being. What is left is a reversion to the certainty of method or the illusion that analytical language metaphors (e.g. coding techniques) may offer the requisite cultural representation for resisting hegemonic educational practices and discourse. However, for Barad, this linguistic, semiotic, and interpretive turn toward cultural representation through language has been given too much power.[2] The overemphasis on linguistic techniques neglects the materiality of our lived contexts and precludes new onto-epistemological framings of the world. Thus, methodology loses its practical and theoretical import, as it resists speaking truths to who we are and might be ontologically and, relatedly, to what we know and what is possible to know epistemologically.

This does not accord with the central tenets of critical inquiry. Critical scholarship that "stands on the sidelines" concerning the productive speaking of truth that is ethically and materially situated reinforces the perspective of the methodologist as a technical expert; a perspective that reifies the concept of truth as methodologically certain and axiologically disengaged. However, Denzin and Lincoln refer to the social inquirer as a politically and morally engaged actor, not a distant technician who relies upon technique to produce truth.[3] Thus, the active political involvement of the inquirer and truth revealed through material engagement, rather than context-independent procedure, are at the heart of critical scholarship. In short, critical thought rests upon the notion of praxis, or action, rather than disengaged method.

In this paper, I return to ancient concepts such as praxis that lay at the heart of critical inquiry to formulate a theoretical and philosophical grounding for the kind of truth that is required of the critical scholar. Such a foundation is perhaps necessary given the hesitation toward truth-telling that is characteristic of educational scholarship that claims criticality, yet reproduces truth as technically situated. The intent is that an investigation of the truths critical inquiry ought to make, grounded in ancient conceptions of practical wisdom and truth-telling, will act as a catalyst for reexamination of ethically situated scholarship and the role of the educational methodologist.

I begin with a consideration of the concept of praxis, noting its centrality in contemporary critical educational perspectives. After briefly discussing some challenges to critical scholarship, and how this perhaps informs the notion of scholarly paralysis mentioned previously, I analyze the concept of praxis within Aristotle's discussion of intellectual virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Praxis represents the tangible manifestation of the intellectual state of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. This contrasts with both epistemic forms of knowledge and skill-production knowledge found in Aristotle's articulation of *techne-poiesis*. By distinguishing these intellectual states, I hope to show that each makes a claim to truth, though importantly, truths of a characteristically different nature. The nature of the truth explicated by *phronesis-praxis* is distinct from epistemic-technical truths (ones that we might say characterize our modern perspectives), yet constitute truths nonetheless. Thus, Aristotle's *phronimos*, or practically wise person, is one who knows and speaks truths. I then attempt to connect the understanding of truth from the *phronesis-praxis* perspective

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2. Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs* 28 (2003).

3. Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The Qualitative Inquiry Reader* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

to Foucault's discussions of *parrhesia*, or truth-telling, in the ancient world. I believe these concepts intersect as they each instantiate truth as an ethical act that cannot be understood from a modern perspective of empirical verification. In discussing and connecting the Aristotelian and Foucauldian conceptions of truth in *phronesis* and *parrhesia*, I hope to theoretically ground truth-telling for critical social justice work. Ultimately, I suggest that to claim one's work as *critical* means to commit to notions of truth found in the character of Aristotle's *phronimos* and Foucault's *parrhesiastes*. I argue that critical inquiry must be understood as a virtuous act rather than a process of technical application, and the role of the methodologist seen as one who intentionally engages in ethical discourse.

Praxis in Critical Educational Thought

The concept of praxis has a long tradition in philosophical inquiry, influencing the work of thinkers from the ancient Greeks to Hegel, Marx, Dewey and other American pragmatists and European existentialists.[4] According to Bernstein, the investigation of praxis, or "action" (though, as I will discuss later, in the Aristotelian sense, a more refined understanding of action related to ethical and political engagement), "has become the dominant concern of the most influential philosophic movements that have emerged since Hegel."[5] Not surprisingly then, considerations of praxis are central to what are termed "critical perspectives" in education. As Pinar and Bowers note, in a broad sense, critical perspectives might be appropriate terminology for a wide range of educational thinkers across diverse philosophical and political affiliations. However, the concept of critical perspectives has largely been appropriated by a group with intellectual roots in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and Marxist/neo-Marxist theorists such as Gramsci, Williams, and Freire.[6] In this section, I examine the centrality of praxis in these particular "critical perspectives" of education, emanating from Freire, and also some of the scholarly critiques aimed at them. It is not the intention to reduce critical scholarship to the critical pedagogical thought of Freire and the educational scholars he has influenced. However, because it is a historically influential school of critical studies in education, and has provoked challenges that inform the situation described in this article's introduction, I intend to use it as a key text of sorts for discussing the issue of critical inquiry that now perhaps sits paralyzed relative to social justice truth-telling.

Paulo Freire famously positions education as a practice of freedom as opposed to a hegemonic process of instilling knowledge in his classic work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.[7] At the heart of this conceptualization of education as a "practice" of freedom is the notion of praxis. Glass writes that Freire's theory of education posited praxis as a primary feature of human life and a necessary condition of freedom. He states that, for Freire, in order to be free and resist oppression, one must engage in praxis, or "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it."[8] Further, Freire distinguishes his conception of education as a "cultural action for freedom" that "can never be accounted for in its complex totality by a mechanistic theory."[9] Thus, he connects

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4. Richard J. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

5. Ibid., xvii.

6. William F. Pinar and C.A. Bowers, "Politics of Curriculum: Origins, Controversies, and Significance of Critical Perspectives," *Review of Research in Education* 18 (1992): 163.

7. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1970).

8. Ronald D. Glass, "On Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberation Education," *Educational Researcher* 30 (2001).

9. Paulo Freire, "Cultural Action for Freedom," Harvard Educational Review (1970): 1.

praxis to explicit transformational action that is distinguished from a technical or applied sciences process.

This form of praxis as socio-political transformation is evident in the work of critical pedagogy scholars heavily influenced by Freire's thought. For example, pressing for a revivification of critical pedagogy in the face of increasing globalization and neoliberal reform at the end of the 20th century, McLaren spoke of a return to "revolutionary praxis" at the heart of both Freirean and Marxist perspectives. Writing against what he perceived as a fragmentation of the unifying socialist ideal of critical pedagogy by the postmodern Left, he states that "the 'totalizing' vision of this project remains compelling and instructive, and indeed remains as urgent today as it was thirty years ago."[10] Others have written of the link between critical pedagogy and critical research. Research in this tradition also carries with it the conception of a liberatory praxis aimed at intervening and disrupting hegemonic formations of the world. Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg, for example, write:

> Inquiry that aspires to the name 'critical' must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or public sphere within the society. Research becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label "political" and unafraid to consummate a relationship with emancipatory consciousness.[11]

Thus, we see that not only is the notion of praxis central to the scholarship of the critical pedagogues, but that it is presented as explicitly political, emancipatory, and even as a "totalizing" narrative in contradistinction to oppressive forms of globalization and neoliberalism.

Scholars influenced by post-structural perspectives have consistently criticized the totalizing narratives and emancipatory goals found within critical pedagogy. Attending more to issues of localized identity, these thinkers have challenged the tenets of critical pedagogy for its binary nature (e.g. socialism vs. global capitalism), its universalizing structure, and its inscription of dominant modes of Western rationalism at the expense of other ways of being and knowing. Pinar and Bowers, for example, outlined major scholarly criticisms of critical pedagogy, noting their own concerns that such theorizing of emancipation through critical reflection and dialogue rested on the rhetoric of European-American discourse, thus displacing other forms of knowledge. Consequently, they argue that critical pedagogy fails to adequately account for identity concepts, such as race and gender, within its class analysis.[12] Ellsworth also challenged these critical perspectives for reaffirming paternalistic accounts of education through "rational" discourse. She discussed critical pedagogy as coming from mostly White, male academics who benefitted from an ahistorical account of giving voice to oppressed groups that would result in emancipatory critical dialogue. She writes:

> I am…suspicious of the desire by the mostly White, middle-class men who write the literature on critical pedagogy to elicit 'full expression' of student voices. Such a relation

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10. Peter McLaren, "Revolutionary Pedagogy in Post-Revolutionary Times: Rethinking the Political Economy of Critical Education," *Educational Theory* 48 (1998): 445.

11. Joe L. Kincheloe, Peter McLaren, & Shirley R. Steinberg, "Critical Pedagogy and Qualitative Research," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011): 164.

12. Pinar and Bowers, *Politics of Curriculum*.

between the teacher/student becomes voyeuristic when the voice of the pedagogue himself goes unexamined.[13]

Lather offered a similar critique in her response to McLaren's call for a revival of emancipatory dialogue. She interpreted such a call as a discourse of critical pedagogy that reinscribed "prescriptive universalizing." Going further, she identified this critical perspective as supporting enlightenment ideals and a utopic vision of absolute, final knowledge. Lather writes:

> And the rhetoric of moral exhortation, the universalizing calls for class and economics as the "motor force" of history, and disattention to the problematic of agency at the end of the metaphysics of subjectivity reinscribe enlightenment-bound critical theory in its project of freedom through conscious expansion of knowledge, a repetition of the Hegelian narrative of the subject of history arriving at absolute knowledge.[14]

These critiques of critical pedagogy reject its metanarrative of emancipation that subsumes local meaning-making, resistance, fragmented identities, and the uncertainty of particular knowledge constructions within its totalizing structure.

Again, it is not the intention to reduce critical scholarship to the perspectives of critical pedagogy. However, highlighting both the central tenets of critical pedagogy scholarship, and the critique of this scholarship from post-structural perspectives, informs the situation that Kuntz describes as "scholarly paralysis" among methodologists who invoke critical inquiry.[15] On one hand, there are critical perspectives committed to an explicit social justice orientation. In order to be critical, one must intervene and confront social injustice with an orientation toward praxis, defined as ethically engaged action. On the other, there are critiques that warn against the development of a totalizing praxis that becomes ahistorical, self-referential, and that sweeps away identity under its universalizing structure. The question that remains is can the ethical commitment to social justice truth-telling characteristic of critical inquiry be reconciled to contextual notions of fragmented truths and identity? As this theme queries, can we move toward a critical praxis that takes on positive notions of truth and the good while still holding to contextual understandings of these notions? I believe that critical methodologists can hold these seemingly contradictory positions. More than that, I believe that an analysis of the ancient concept of praxis, and its overarching intellectual state of *phronesis* as found in Aristotle, underscores the necessity of holding to a discourse that is ethically committed on the one hand, yet attuned to the particularities of context and experience on the other. It is to an examination of these concepts that I turn next to offer a theoretical basis for critical scholarship conceptualized as virtue rather than technique.

Aristotelian *phronesis-praxis*

Bernstein writes that praxis is frequently translated into English as "practice". However, he suggests that this unfortunately substitutes a low-level interpretation of practicality, engaged with mundane activities, for the high-level understanding of practice or action found in Aristotle's

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13. Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy," *Harvard Educational Review* 59 (1989): 312.

14. Patti Lather, "Critical Pedagogy and Its Complicities: A Praxis of Stuck Places," *Educational Theory* 48 (1998): 488-490.

15. Kuntz, *Responsible Methodologist*.

articulation. Though he does note that praxis takes on a quasi-technical meaning in Aristotle at times, Bernstein also contends that Aristotle introduces a more refined definition of praxis as dealing with activities characteristic of someone's ethical and political life. It is thus distinguished in this sense from theory or the production of an artifact, and characterized by action or *doing* proper. He writes that praxis in this more restricted sense "signifies the disciplines and activities predominant in man's ethical and political life. These disciplines can be contrasted with '*theoria*' because their end is not knowing or wisdom for its own sake, but doing—living well."[16] The distinctions between the "action" or "doing" quality of praxis and that of theory and production are taken from Aristotle's discussion of the intellectual virtues, primarily found in book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here, praxis represents the tangible manifestation of the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom, or *phronesis*.

As said previously, praxis and *phronesis* are jointly linked in Aristotle's consideration of the intellectual virtues. *Phronesis*, or practical wisdom, constitutes the reasoning that produces or allows for the action, or praxis, of a good end. A central point of the analysis in this section is that *phronesis* involves value-rational deliberation, whereas the contrasting states of *episteme* and *techne* involve either no deliberation or deliberation only about means rather than ends. [17] This is a crucial point in the consideration of critical work, as scholarship claiming criticality must recognize the importance of virtuous deliberation. In other words, a *critical* scholar does in fact "critique" through deliberating about "what should be" rather than simply displaying "what is" or technically calculating how to reach a pre-determined outcome. The following discussion of Aristotle's intellectual states is meant to highlight the unique nature of *phronesis-praxis*, its key differences from other forms of intellect, and its appropriateness as a theoretical framework for critical scholarship.

Episteme

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses several intellectual states which comprise the virtuous person. The first of these intellectual states of reason is *episteme*, which can be translated as scientific knowledge. Aristotle describes the nature of scientific knowledge as that which "cannot be otherwise."[18] He goes on to explain that scientific knowledge is eternal and does not come into being or cease to be. Due to the eternal essence of scientific knowledge, Aristotle contends that it is teachable and its object learnable and concerned with universal principles, either through induction or deduction. He closes his discussion of scientific knowledge by saying that it "is a state by which we demonstrate."[19] In summary, *episteme* is a state of reason dealing with universal principles or laws that one can teach or demonstrate.

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16. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, xiv.
17. There are really five intellectual virtues discussed by Aristotle, including intuitive reason and philosophic wisdom in addition to *episteme, techne, and phronesis*. However, because the other two are primarily discussed as characteristically related to one of the other three, many scholars engage with the distinctions between the first three only.
18. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 105.
19. Ibid., 106.

Techne

The intellectual state of *techne* is often translated into the word "skill." Aristotle first distinguishes skill by describing it as a "productive state involving true reason."[20] It is a rational state concerning production or bringing things into being. *Techne* differs from *episteme* because it is not concerned with things that come into being by necessity and is "concerned with what can be otherwise."[21] Skill carries with it a connotation of context-dependent knowledge. Whereas scientific knowledge is concerned with demonstrable universal principles, skill is concerned with practical knowledge. Though skill is concerned with the practical knowledge of things which can be otherwise, it is also concerned with producing things distinct from itself. The means are separated from the ends. Thus, Aristotle equates *techne* with production. It is the "know-how" or skill knowledge of producing something for an external end.

Phronesis

The intellectual state of *phronesis* is often translated into the phrase "practical wisdom." Aristotle begins his discussion of *phronesis* by considering the characteristics of those society calls practically wise. According to Aristotle, the practically wise person can "deliberate nobly about what is good and beneficial for himself" and can see "what is good for themselves and what is good for people in general."[22] The concept of deliberation already distinguishes practical wisdom from scientific knowledge because deliberation is not involved in things which are universal. Aristotle further distinguishes it from scientific knowledge by stating that practical wisdom requires an understanding of particulars and not universals only.[23] Thus, practical wisdom, like skill, is concerned with the practical knowledge of things that are variable. However, Aristotle makes a clear distinction between *phronesis* and *techne* as well. Whereas skill is associated with production, practical wisdom is associated with action, or praxis. Aristotle writes, "For while production (*poiesis*) has an end distinct from itself, this could not be so with action (*praxis*), since the end here is acting well itself."[24] Thus, *phronesis* is an intellectual state of practical knowledge concerning values, or as Aristotle describes it, concerning "what is good and bad for a human being."[25] The value rationality offered by *phronesis* stands in stark contrast to the technical rationality of *techne* and the theoretical rationality of *episteme*.

As noted earlier, the concept of deliberation is central to Aristotle's understanding of *phronesis* and has crucial links to critical scholarship. He writes that *phronesis* is concerned with "things human about which it is possible to deliberate."[26] Recall that epistemic understanding are said to be universal and demonstrable from eternal principles. Thus, they require no deliberation. Making this point, Aristotle states that the work of the practically wise person is to deliberate well, noting importantly, "but no one deliberates about things invariable, or about things which have not an end which is a good that can be brought about by action."[27] Additionally, the state of *techne* does require deliberation, but only about the means to reach an already accepted outcome. This is

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20. Ibid., 106.
21. Ibid.*,* 107.
22. Ibid., 108.
23. Ibid., 110.
24. Ibid., 107.
25. Ibid., 107.
26. Ibid., 108.
27. Ibid.*,* 109.

the realm of the craftsmen or skilled technician. *Phronesis* extends the concept of deliberation to the realm of the ethical and political as it is ultimately deliberation about virtuous living and doing; about what is good for oneself and others.

There are several points from this analysis that are important within the larger consideration of critical scholarship and truth-telling. First, praxis is situated within the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* and its characteristics of practical and value rationality. Thus, praxis is an enactment of the ethical and political deliberation characteristic of *phronesis*, specifically those actions which are human goods. Second, as a consequence of the first consideration, praxis emanates from a practical wisdom that deliberates about human affairs which are variable, not toward universal principles which are invariable. By its very nature, then, praxis in the Aristotelian sense is ethical engagement, but not about a fixed reality in my view. Third, and perhaps more instructive, is Aristotle's comments that *phronesis* does not involve deliberation "about things which have not an end which is a good that can be brought about by action."[28] This speaks to the important distinction between *techne-poiesis* and *phronesis-praxis*. Recall that Aristotle comments, "For while production (*poiesis*) has an end distinct from itself, this could not be so with action (*praxis*), since the end here is acting well itself."[29] Thus, while *techne-poiesis* involves an instrumental rationality requiring deliberation about the means to reach a pre-determined end, *phronesis-praxis* involves deliberation and performance of the end itself. Furthermore, Aristotle perhaps indicates that the end, or good, is "brought about" by the action. And, because these ends are not universal in scope, perhaps action, and the practical wisdom which governs it, actually creates the end according to the circumstances at play in a given context.

I will say more about these considerations when discussing the nature of truth within the context of *phronesis-praxis*. For now, it is important to note that the use of praxis within much critical scholarship, perhaps exemplified by perspectives of critical pedagogy, indicates technical and epistemic notions. Liberatory praxis, or reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it, is implicated as a means to reach a pre-determined, acontextual, and universal aim of emancipation. This contrasts slightly, but crucially, with my reading of praxis in Aristotle as action that brings about human goods that are variable, rather than universal, and fitted to the circumstances of particular contexts. Interestingly, Polansky notes that the Marxist tradition (from which critical pedagogy operates) does not maintain Aristotle's distinction of *praxis* and *poiesis*.[30] This suggests that perhaps critical scholarship has operated from a conflated understanding of action and production; one that implies a universal aim to which post-modern/structural scholars cry foul for its inability to respond to local and multi-faceted identities. But, if the scholarly response is to disregard truth-telling altogether, this certainly does not align with criticality or praxis. These notions can, and must, still exist even within the more messy and uncertain terrain of praxis that I have attempted to describe here. This is reflected in the many and varied calls for situated and reflective inquiry in social science fields. These calls do not abandon truth altogether but rather see it as multi-faceted, variable, and responsive to complex circumstances. It is to these accounts that I turn next to examine the nature of truth within *phronesis-praxis*.

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28. Ibid., 109.
29. Ibid.*,* 107.
30. Ronald Polansky, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambrdige: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 11.

Social Inquiry as Phronetic Entanglement with Truth

Kinsella and Pittman explain that numerous social theorists have indicated that value rationality has given way to instrumental rationality in professional knowledge over the past two centuries. However, the authors also state that many scholars have called for a reconceptualization of professional knowledge that draws upon *phronesis*.[31] This is reflected in the work of Schön who articulates a conception of professional practice that breaks from the dominant mode of technical rationality, "which has most powerfully shaped both our thinking about the professions and the institutional relations of research, education, and practice."[32] He contends that, where technical rationality conceives of practice as problem *solving*, real practice is also concerned with problem *setting*, or "the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved."[33] Using a powerful example of building roads, Schön writes that problem solving by the application of techniques occurs when one decides upon the kind of road to build. However, this is not the only consideration because "when the road they have built leads unexpectedly to the destruction of a neighborhood, they may find themselves again in a situation of uncertainty."[34] Thus, the ends of "reflective practice" in Schön's sense are not fixed, but emergent based on the ethical considerations of particular contexts. This speaks to the nature of deliberation about values characteristic in the *phronesis-praxis* perspective. It also highlights that technical considerations of methodological practice dominate modern perspectives to the exclusion of critically engaged discourse.

Scholars in the field of education have applied the general discussion of *phronesis* in the professions to the discipline of teaching in order to break from the dominance of technical rationality. Noel, for example, discusses three different interpretations of *phronesis* that generate different educational perspectives and that a combination of these interpretations makes up the concept of *phronesis* for teaching.[35] The first interpretation is the rationality interpretation which requires teachers to actively examine their beliefs, desires, and actions when deliberating about what to do in the classroom. The second is the situational perception and insight interpretation. Drawing upon Dunne, Noel writes that this interpretation is concerned with the momentary insights that arise within experience. Dunne posits that those guided by *phronesis* may have insights that others in the same situation do not because they have an "eye" for it.[36] Lastly, the moral interpretation inextricably links practice with one's character. Noel again draws upon Dunne for clarification of this interpretation who writes that there is no *phronesis* without virtuous character and no virtuous character without *phronesis*.[37] Here again, we see both practical and value rationality where truth is conceptualized not as something fixed or pre-determined, but as contextually dependent and ethically involved. This is important as the phronetic framework allows the critical inquirer to engage in ethical discourse while remaining committed to truth-telling that is not subsumed by the rigidity of technical rationality.

In the field of social inquiry more broadly, we also see calls for ethically engaged praxis, but that which is contingent and in recognition of the uncertainty of diverse contexts. Macklin and

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31. Elizabeth Anne Kinsella & Allan Pittman, eds., *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge: Practical Wisdom in the Professions* (Rotterdam: Sense, 2012).

32. Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner* (New York: Basic, 1983), 21.

33. Ibid., 39-40.

34. Ibid., 40.

35. Jand Noel, "On the Varieties of Phronesis," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 31 (1999): 273-289.

36. Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground: "Phronesis" and "techne" in Modern Philosophy and in Aristotle* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1993): 282.

37. Ibid., 284.

Whiteford, for example, suggest appealing to Aristotelian *phronesis* to ground qualitative research in rational discourse within the academy rather than trying to dismantle scientific reason from its dominant position.[38] Borrowing from Derrida and Caputo, these authors suggest that practical wisdom within qualitative inquiry must accept and contend with *aporias*, or the perplexities and inconsistencies ingrained in particular contexts that disallow a clear objective for determining how to apply principles to practice. They write, "We must therefore rely on our practical wisdom to make good judgments in the face of these perplexities. In doing so, it will always be the case that our judgments are underdetermined by the facts."[39] Thus, social inquiry in this sense engages with truth, but truth of a different nature than we might traditionally conceive of in a world dominated by scientific reason. It is a contingent truth that resists (and we might say that is unconcerned with) empirical verification. Connecting this discussion back to the larger argument concerning critical scholarship, methodologists claiming criticality may find a more appropriate framework for inquiry in social science scholarship grounded in *phronesis*. This framework decenters empirical certainty gained through a narrow technicism and emphasizes the contingent and slippery nature of ethical engagement.

Lather's appraisal of McLaren's call for a renewed commitment to emancipatory politics is instructive here. She charges that McLaren assumes possibilities of a "universalizing discourse of truth telling, and correct readings in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty."[40] Lather, rather, offers a "praxis of stuck places" that moves away from "the Marxist dream of 'cure, salvation, and redemption.'"[41] She writes,

> I am trying to enact a logic that thinks praxis as a practice of living on where "one must work—practically, actually," while simultaneously dislocating the self-presence of any successor regime as a sort of redemption…As a double-edged story that attests to the possibilities of feminist practice yet, in the very telling, registers the limits of it as a vehicle for claiming truth, such a practice is a topology for new tasks toward other places of thinking and putting to work.[42]

The goal of such a praxis orientation, then, is not to give up on practices of truth-telling but to recognize the complexity of context and to resist the abstraction to universal meaning. Such an abstraction would constitute a move from a "practice of living" to a demonstration of rules; in my view, from *phronesis* to *episteme*. The intention here is to illustrate the calls for a situated understanding of truth-telling, but not one that devolves into a naïve sense of relativism. Rather, these perspectives indicate a framework for truth that a critical inquirer might utilize to productively engage in a dialogic sense of ethical formation with oneself and others. The critical inquirer might not revert simply to discussions of methodological technique that "validate" truth, but to the ethical, political, and social dimensions of his scholarship.

Lastly, Flyvbjerg argues that the social sciences require a reconceptualization toward Aristotelian *phronesis* if they are to succeed. He contends that social inquiry is maintained as a weaker sibling of the natural sciences because it has tried to emulate the epistemic and technical

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38. Rob Macklin & Gail Whiteford, "Phronesis, Aporia, and Qualitative Research," in Elizabeth Anne Kinsella & Allan Pittman, eds., *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge: Practical Wisdom in the Professions* (Rotterdam: Sense, 2012).
39. Ibid., 95.
40. Lather, "Critical Pedagogy," 492.
41. Ibid., 495.
42. Ibid., 497.

assumptions of these disciplines. As a result, the social sciences are trapped in a losing battle because its practitioners have accepted self-defeating terms. Flyvbjerg writes that the social sciences must be reframed so that they contribute to practical and value rationality, claiming "just as the social sciences have not contributed much to explanatory and predictive theory, neither have the natural sciences contributed to the reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests…which is at the core of *phronesis*."[43] Components of this phronetic social science include inquiry that engages value-rational questions (e.g. Where are we going? Is this desirable? What should be done?) and methodological guidelines such as dialoguing with a polyphony of voices. Phronetic research is thus dialogic with no voice claiming final authority. In my view, the perspectives exemplified by the scholars outlined here theoretically ground considerations of truth within critical scholarship. Truly critical inquirers must move beyond the perceived certainty of technique to the potentially more uncertain, but nonetheless committed, domain of ethical intervention in their work. The dialogic nature of phronetic critical inquiry suggests that the goal of this work is characteristically different than what might be typically thought of within the empirical sciences. It might be to offer new avenues and insights into an ongoing moral discourse with the goal of expanding our understanding of the problems at hand. As Geertz suggests, it is "marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other."[44]

This brief account of scholarship that engages phronetic conceptualizations introduces two interrelated points that are critical for the larger discussion in this paper. First, these authors do not view the move from epistemic or technical notions to phronetic ones as moves from truth to a lack of truth, or from rationality to irrationality. They conceive of positive conceptions of truth even within the now slippery and uncertain terrain of *phronesis*. For example, Macklin and Whiteford speak of making good judgments in the face of perplexities, while Lather posits praxis as a practice of living and discusses attesting to the possibilities of feminist practice. Also, Flyvbjerg's "phronetic social science" requires producing input into social dialogue and praxis. Thus, speaking truths is not abandoned. Second, and following from the first point, these truths are simply of a different nature and rationality than the epistemic or technical ones that are prominent in modern times. Macklin and Whiteford suggest that our judgments are always underdetermined by the facts, Lather states that her attestations simultaneously place limits as a vehicle for universal truth, and Flyvbjerg contends that the goal of producing input in the phronetic sense is not to generate ultimate knowledge. Thus, we have truths that are contextually grounded and that operate outside of the realm of empirical verification. I want to briefly return to Aristotle to highlight these points regarding the nature of truth in *phronesis* before finding points of connection with Foucault's sense of *parrhesia*.

Aristotle notes that the intellectual virtues discussed in *Nicomachean Ethics* are states that "allow the soul to arrive at truth."[45] As one of these intellectual virtues, *phronesis* then has a relation to truth but, as discussed previously, this truth is of a different nature than that of epistemic or technically grounded truths. First, it is a kind of truth which guides a person's ethical and political engagements. Aristotle's definition of *phronesis* as "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man" highlights this point.[46] As Kinsella and

43. Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3.

44. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 29.

45. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 102.

46. Ibid., 106.

Pittman describe it, *phronesis* "is an intellectual virtue that implies ethics…It is pragmatic, variable, context-dependent, and oriented toward action."[47] The practical and situated nature of truth in *phronesis* is suggested when Aristotle states that practical wisdom is not only concerned with universals, but "must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars."[48] Thus, truth of the phronetic sense incorporates practical and value rationality and contributes to our ethical understandings of the world.

This much has already been suggested, but there are two other important aspects of truth within *phronesis* that I want to discuss which connect it with truth-telling. The first is that the truths of practical wisdom are clearly active and guide the actions of the practically wise person, or the *phronimos*. The *phronimos* is not simply one who possesses the understanding of what is right to do in a particular situation, but is also the one who possesses the capacity to carry this out in action. Here again, we see the relation between *phronesis* and praxis. To know, or to possess truth phronetically, is to actually put into practice the knowledge of what is good for oneself. As Aristotle states, *phronesis* is not only knowledge of the truth but a "reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man."[49] Second, the truths of *phronesis* take on both an individual and social aspect. Aristotle writes that those with practical wisdom are those that "can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general."[50] At times, Aristotle seems to emphasize the individual nature of *phronesis*, as if it is particular knowledge of what is good or the right thing to do for oneself alone. He writes that practical wisdom is "identified especially with that form of it which is concerned with a man himself—with the individual", while the wisdom of legislating concerning others, for example, is described as "political wisdom."[51] Aristotle, though, reflects that "perhaps one's own good cannot exist without household management, nor without a form of government," those entities many identify with a different conception of political wisdom.[52] This suggests that *phronesis* involves both individual *and* social aspects, ethical *and* political engagements, care for the self *and* care for others. Indeed, Bernstein notes that, for Aristotle, "individual ethical activity is properly a part of the study of political activity—activity in the '*polis*.'"[53]

From the preceding analysis of social inquiry theories engaging *phronesis* and the analysis of Aristotle's own articulation, we see the following: 1) *phronesis* involves truth, but truth that is contextually situated rather than empirically verifiable or epistemically guaranteed, 2) the truths involved in *phronesis* are ethically and politically active, and 3) the truths of *phronesis* have both individual and social components; they involve a care of the self and care for others. In my view, these aspects of "phronetic truth," as it might be termed, correspond with many of the aspects of *parrhesia*, or truth-telling, as explained by Foucault. It is such a framework of truth-telling, understood as connected to an Aristotelian framework of *phronesis-praxis*, that I believe provides a philosophical grounding or rationality that allows for critical truth-telling in our postmodern moment.

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47. Kinsella and Pittman, *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge*, 2.
48. Aristotle, *Ethics,* 2009, 109.
49. Ibid., 106.
50. Ibid., 106.
51. Ibid., 109.
52. Ibid., 110.
53. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, xiv.

Foucault, *parrhesia*, and *phronesis*

Foucault examines the nature of truth-telling through his analysis of the ancient Greek concept of *parrhesia* in some of his final lectures. He notes that, etymologically, the word means to "say everything", as the *parrhesiastes*, or the one who uses *parrhesia*, "does not hide anything, but opens his heart and mind completely to other people through his discourse."[54] Linking the term to truth, Foucault discusses that the verb form of *parrhesia*, *parrhesiazethai*, means "to tell the truth."[55] However, he explains that the term is often translated as free-spokenness or free speech.[56] Furthermore, in ancient Greece, *parrhesia* denoted status, as it was free citizens who held the ability to engage in *parrhesia*. Thus, the *parrhesiastes* was one who possessed the right to tell the truth in their activity within the polis. Foucault analyzes *parrhesia* through an investigation of the nature and status of the truth-teller and his evolution in the ancient Greek context by examining several different texts and characters in antiquity. In this section, I highlight several key aspects of *parrhesia* and connect them with elements of *phronesis* to further develop a framework for truth-telling that aligns with critical inquiry.

The first important link between *parrhesia* and *phronesis* concerns Foucault's question of how we know someone is a truth-teller or how we know that the *parrhesiastes* really tells the truth. Foucault explains that the truth-teller says what he knows to be true and that there is always an exact coincidence between belief and truth in *parrhesia*. Importantly though, this truth is not empirically verifiable. Foucault writes,

> For since Descartes, the coincidence between belief and truth is obtained in a certain (mental) evidential experience. For the Greeks, however, the coincidence between belief and truth does not take place in a (mental) experience, but in a *verbal activity,* namely, *parrhesia.* It appears that *parrhesia,* in this Greek sense, can no longer occur in our modern epistemological framework.[57]

The truth of *parrhesia*, then, is not epistemically grounded. Recall that within the Aristotelian virtues, *episteme* is the state of scientific knowledge or laws of nature that are teachable and easily demonstrated from universal principles. It would seem that the *parrhesiastes* is not engaged in a simple demonstration of truths in this sense. As Foucault explains, the reduction of truth to empirical verification is a modern construction that was foreign to the Greeks. More important to the Greeks than the question of the certainty of truth (in an empirical sense) was the question of how we recognize someone as a truth-teller.

It is this question of the recognition of the truth-teller that specifically links *parrhesia* with *phronesis*. Foucault explains that the "proof" of the sincerity of the truth-teller is his courage because he says something that is dangerous. The potential for the truth-teller to incur wrath from his addressee was one of the key elements of *parrhesia* in the Greek context. Foucault writes that "when a philosopher addresses himself to a sovereign, to a tyrant, and tells him that his tyranny is disturbing…then the philosopher speaks the truth."[58] On the other hand, one who speaks the truth but takes on no risk is not a *parrhesiastes*. But why does this additional element of risk in *parrhesia*

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54. Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext€, 2001), 12.
55. Ibid., 14.
56. Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, ed. Frederic Gros (New York: Macmillan, 2011).
57. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 14.
58. Ibid., 16.

link it to *phronesis*? It is because the *parrhesiastes* is willing to risk potential danger because of his ethical and political commitments to those he addresses. A lengthy passage from Foucault is instructive here. He writes,

> When, for example, you see a friend doing something wrong and you risk incurring his anger by telling him he is wrong, you are acting as a parrhesiastes…If, in a political debate, an orator risks losing his popularity because his opinions are contrary to the majority's opinion, or his opinions may usher in a political scandal, he uses parrhesia.[59]

Thus, we see that the truths told by the *parrhesiastes* are ethically laden, rather than empirically validated. Furthermore, Foucault notes that the validation of the truth-teller in ancient Greece was that such a person had certain moral qualities. He writes, "The 'parrhesiastic game' presupposes that the parrhesiastes is someone who has the moral qualities which are required, first, to know the truth, and secondly, to convey such truth to others."[60] *Parrhesia*, then, involves speaking truths about what is good and bad for humans, the distinctive character of Aristotelian *phronesis*.

Parrhesia is further linked with *phronesis* because of its contextual nature, its impact on practice, and its inter and intrapersonal dynamics. Regarding the first point, Foucault distinguishes *parrhesia* from *athuroglossos*, or someone who is a babbler and says whatever comes to mind. Whereas the one using *athuroglossos* does not recognize when to speak and when to be silent, the *parrhesiastes* is firmly aware of the contextual circumstances that require truth-telling and that might call for reservation. The one using *athuroglossos* cannot distinguish "the circumstances and situations where speech is required from those where one ought to remain silent."[61] This connects with the context-dependent nature of the practical wisdom of *phronesis* and reflects Dreyfus' interpretation of the *phronimos* as the expert social actor.[62] Secondly, *parrhesia* is validated through the harmony between the truth-teller's words and his life. An important distinction is made between what Foucault terms "political" *parrhesia* and "philosophical" *parrhesia*. In its original political sense, *parrhesia* generally took the form of someone speaking the truth to a ruler or to the assembly, but as it shifted to the philosophical sense, Foucault writes that "the target of this new parrhesia is not to persuade the Assembly, but to convince someone that he must take care of himself and of others; and this means that he must *change his life*."[63] Just as *phronesis* guides praxis, or action related to right living, *parrhesia* speaks truths that are relatable in the right actions of someone's life. Finally, Foucault notes that in the philosophical shift of *parrhesia*, truth-telling has both social and individual dynamics. He explains that *parrhesia* in the philosophical sense occurs in the context of community life, human relationships of public life, and individual personal relationships. The truth-teller knows to tell the truth to others so that they may change their actions. Interestingly, *parrhesia* also becomes a form of self-examination. Foucault explains that a noticeable shift occurs in the parrhesiastic practices between master and disciple. Previously, the master had always disclosed truths to the disciple, but in later iterations of *parrhesia* the truth about the disciple "emerges from a personal relation which he establishes with himself; and this truth can

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59. Ibid., 16.
60. Ibid., 15.
61. Ibid., 63.
62. Hubert Dreyfus, "Could Anything be More Intelligible than Everyday Intelligibility? Reinterpreting Division I of Being and Time in the Light of Division II," *Appropriating Heidegger* (2000): 155-174.
63. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 108.

now be disclosed either to himself…or to someone else."[64] In this sense, the *parrhesiastes* possesses the truth in relation to oneself and others. Thus, we might say that the *parrhesiastes* is also a *phronimos*, as this person is characterized as someone who "can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general."[65]

Here, I have attempted to illustrate points of connection between Aristotelian *phronesis* and Foucaultian *parrhesia*. Through this examination, I suggest that *parrhesia* is a phronetic act. The truths spoken in this act of truth-telling are not epistemic, but are rather ethically based, contextual, and guide the right living (or praxis) of oneself and others, the key characteristics of Aristotelian *phronesis*. Interestingly, Foucault engages with the art of living and, thus, examines "techniques" of *parrhesia*. As Flyvbjerg (2001) notes, however, Foucault's later shift to a focus on *techne* is not *techne* in the conventional sense of an applied science or applied *episteme*. It is *techne* "'from the other side,' that is from values-what is 'good and bad for man,' in Aristotle's words-which is, in my interpretation, from *phronesis*."[66] This link between *phronesis* and *parrhesia* provides an important framework through which to view critical truth-telling in a social world that we also take to be complex, contingent, and fractured. It is through this crucial link between Aristotle and Foucault that I believe we have a rational grounding for maintaining truth that ethically and politically intervenes in the world, but that also resists the move to universalize and prescribe. I conclude with a consideration of the implications of such a philosophical grounding for critical inquiry.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have specifically engaged with the problem of what Kuntz terms "scholarly paralysis" within critical inquiry.[67] Despite the proliferation of the term *critical* in educational discourse, there is a specific tension between criticality and the problem of truth. Using the dialogue between critical pedagogy scholarship and the critiques of it offered by those influenced by post-structural perspectives as a key text, I have tried to highlight the contested nature between the commitment to social justice aims on one hand (from the critical perspective) and the resistance to universalized theories of emancipatory narratives on the other (the post-structural critique). This, perhaps, informs the situation of scholarly paralysis relative to truth-telling. In other words, though so many want to identify as "critical," few want to engage in truth-telling for fear of universalizing or prescribing, substituting one mode of domination for another.

However, to engage in critical work is to engage in processes which intervene in the status quo and contribute to praxis. Thus, critical intervention and truth-telling must be involved. What, then, is the way around the seeming contradiction between criticality and resistance to truth-telling? Investigations of Aristotelian *phronesis* and Foucauldian *parrhesia*, and the crucial link between the two, help to provide a response. Each ancient concept is committed to the ethical formation of self and others. At the same time, each is committed to practical living and the contingencies of specific contexts. With this theoretical grounding, one can remain committed to social justice work and critical truth-telling while recognizing the historical and contextual limitations of such practices.

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64. Ibid., 164-165.
65. Aristotle, *Ethics*, 2009, 106.
66. Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter*, 111.
67. Kuntz, *Responsible Methodologist*, 22.

Foucault's positive conception of truth in discussion of *parrhesia* presents a stark contrast to his earlier work identifying the power effects of truth. Ross suggests that the positive ethical formation of truth in *parrhesia* stands as a disposition which shapes the will against unthinking patterns of authority that Foucault had analyzed earlier. She writes,

> It seems Foucault in the end moves away from the modern ideal of philosophical activity…to the ancient one of aesthetic self-forming. What the exemplar chooses is primarily a relation to themselves, rather than the aspiration to shape practices. As an ethical project the stylisation of the self in relation to truth may well chart an alternative path for forms of existence to the paths of practices elaborated and reinforced by the normalising tendencies of the disciplines but neither do such projects of self-stylisation pretend or aspire to legislative force.[68]

What Foucault speaks of as aesthetics, techniques, or care of the self, necessitates a relation to truth, but one that ethically works on the self in dialogue with others while resisting the move to universalize.

Additionally, Kuntz suggests that the work of truth-telling in critical social inquiry be re-formulated as an understanding of relationality in contrast to naïve relativism that he claims is simplistically associated with postmodern thought. It is an understanding of truth as relative (i.e. you have yours, I have mine) that stifles claims to truth and leads the inquirer to scholarly paralysis at best and a reversion to truth generated by methodological technicism at worst. But, when one understands the world as relational, the social inquirer recognizes a responsibility to engage in truth-telling. Kuntz writes,

> Epistemologically, relativism reinforces particularistic ways of coming to know—as though no knowledge can be extended beyond the immediate environment in which it is made manifest. This, in turn, leads to a degree of ontological disengagement and disinterestedness…I note this as a simplistic reading of postmodern thought…The point of relational assumptions about the world is not that all things are relative and therefore I have no right to intervene in other relations; it is, indeed, quite the opposite. *Because I am forever in-relation, I have a responsibility to engage; I am never free to pretend a disassociated stance.*"[69]

This relational quality of truth-telling redirects the critical scholar to engage in ethical discourse; truth-telling related to right living guided by practical insight. In other words, this is rationalizing critical inquiry as engagement in *parrhesia* as a phronetic act rather than understanding truth-telling in the domain of epistemic or technical formations.

To conclude, I draw two final implications for critical inquiry. One, the critical inquirer must engage in ethical dialogue that contributes to praxis, or our understanding of *phronesis*, of what is good and bad for human beings. This requires truth-telling, but truth-telling that is relational and accountable to where those truths come from. Critical inquiry so conceived would resist the move toward epistemically guaranteed knowledge validated through methodological technique. As Flyvbjerg notes, "the goal of phronetic research is to produce input to the ongoing social

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68. Alison Ross, "Why is 'Speaking the Truth' Fearless? 'Danger' and 'Truth' in Foucault's Discussion of *Parrhesia*," *Parrhesia* 4 (2008): 70.

69. Kuntz, *Responsible Methodologist*, 73.

dialogue and praxis in a society, rather than to generate ultimate, unequivocally verified knowledge."[70]

Two, following from the first point, methodologists claiming to engage in "critical" scholarship must re-think their role as technical expert and place more emphasis on their role as virtuous truth-teller. Because solely technical approaches cannot intervene in the status quo and maintain the idea of the disengaged social actor (recall Aristotle's distinction between *techne* and *phronesis*), something more than a technical expertise with research methods is needed within critical scholarship. Though there is purpose for the actual approaches of conducting research (e.g. research designs, methods of data collection/analysis), this alone is not a means for critical truth-telling in the phronetic sense I have described here.

Critical inquiry conceived as virtue as opposed to technique would have important implications for methodological philosophy and practice. For example, the inquirer might emphasize working with participants to effectively challenge what are seen as problematic or even oppressive structures within the educational landscape. This contrasts with the notion of seeing participants or research spaces as sites of knowledge to be extracted through methodological procedures. Additionally, inquiry from the standpoint of virtuous truth-telling and contribution to dialogic praxis might be more concerned with Gadamer's sense of a "fusion of horizons"[71]; the points of connection between two socially embedded worldviews rather than discovery of some underlying eternal truth or reality. Lastly, critical inquirers might utilize analytical practices that better engage the material reality of our lived contexts, rather than traditional approaches that privilege technique and the unified subject.[72]

It might be argued that the decentering of epistemic and technical rationalities I have suggested here contradict Aristotle's more unified vision of the states of virtue. My intention, however, is to indicate that a separation of this unified vision of virtue has already occurred within our modern emphases on empirical certainty and technical validity to the detriment of practical wisdom. I argue that critical scholarship must turn toward the virtue of *phronesis* as a more appropriate theoretical framework that pushes back against the pull toward methodological technicism. Interestingly, Aristotle notes that all the intellectual states function together to form the virtuous person, yet *phronesis* is at the heart of this, "for with the presence of the one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the virtues."[73] Thus, *phronesis* allows for not only the dialogic encounter of truth-telling that I have argued for, but also for the critical inquirer to judge how best to use particular techniques to further ethical truth-telling for intervention and, if necessary, disruption of normative formations. Such reformulations of methodology allow for a fuller sense of critical inquiry that reaffirms the commitment to the ethical imperatives of social justice and the good.

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Dropping My Anchor Here: A Post-Oppositional Approach to Social Justice Work in Education

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Abstract

In this paper, I explore the ways in which post-oppositional theorizing can be used to bridge between qualitative inquiry and praxis to address issues of inequities in education. I present an overview of how oppositional thinking has been privileged in academia creating an ontological trapping, with subsequent drainage of our energies and efforts. I offer post-oppositional onto-epistemologies as an invitation to examine our wounds, deeply held belief systems, and understand their manifestations forms while using a critical, post-oppositional lens. Thus, I advocate for cultivating conditions via post-oppositionality that would create onto-epistemic shifts in our scholarly activist work in education. Critical inquiry using post-opppositionality allows for imaginations and enactments of possibilities (without demonizing oppositional discourses), that affect the lives of those who suffer from the networked effects of various social structures of oppression in education.

The concept of inquiry within the educational landscape has been intersected by positivist, post-positivist, critical, and deconstructive approaches over several decades. Yet, somehow, critical problems in education are addressed in fragmented ways. There are those who work in theoretical, pragmatic, and methodological spaces, and the conversations between/across all three spaces are minimal, yet necessary to activate, especially within the context of critical inquiry (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). Perhaps such gaps are indications of training and/or career preferences, however, the inequities that exist in education need the collective talent, intelligence, commitment, and partnership of educational scholars, leaders, and practitioners for not only challenging status quo of dominant hegemonic discourses, but creating possibilities of an equitable future through situated, contextualized, fierce truth telling.[1] While on one hand critical and deconstructive scholars have opened up spaces with their critiques, and rightfully so, on the other hand such critiques have caused a paralysis of what needs to be done on the ground at a material level while putting theory to work.

Over the last decade, there has been methodological debates about what truth claims can be made, who should make those claims, what putting theory to work might look like, and what methodological moves are considered simplistic while discourse about evidence-based inquiry gained traction in all areas of education including funding, evaluation, and accountability

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1. Aaron Kuntz (2015) discusses the role of the qualitative researcher where he unpacks truth telling versus bullshitting.

(Bhattacharya, 2014; Bloch, 2004; Cannella & Lincoln, 2004; Koro-Ljungberg, 2004; Pearl & Knight, 2010). These discussions have created several academic camps that are in opposition to one another, and while such oppositions can be fruitful for academic dialogues and interrogation of idea, one truth that cannot be denied is that there is an incredible amount of human suffering within educational spaces due to the ways in which social structures of oppression are enacted in these spaces. In other words, even if the subaltern cannot speak (Chakravorty Spivak, 1993), the subaltern still suffers, whether or not such suffering could be diligently, transparently, and accurately addressed.

Framing and Orientation of this Paper

In this paper, I use post-oppositional theorizing that informs the ways in which qualitative inquiry can be brought to bear on issues of educational inequities, while moving away from methodological paralysis to bridging theory, inquiry, and praxis. I make some truth claims, which are not absolute, but are presented as anchors that I have dropped for myself for doing the bridgework informed by post-oppositional onto-epistemology. I explore these truth claims critically[2], while specifically drawing from exemplars that demonstrate partnership between stakeholders who work in theoretical, methodological, and practitioner spaces. I argue that such anchors are necessary to build theory-driven solidarity in praxis, feel less paralyzed, and make claims without being afraid of critiques. Critiques[3] are necessary for strengthening claims, however, they should not create such fear, that one feels paralyzed to make truth claims. Indeed those who are experiencing material suffering would be agentic enough to make their own truth claims if one was willing to listen. Given that truth claims about minoritized populations are always already constructed, it becomes necessary for those who work in critical spaces to disrupt such construction while being aware of the trappings of oppositional discursive relationships.

Thus, the choice of post-oppositional theorizing is driven by the need to move beyond politicized academic camps to spaces of imagination and possibility without the need to place this work in opposition to that which came before, where we justify our ideas as better than what was presented, as if to create some sort of intellectual victory. Ana Louise Keating (2013) describes this cultivation of oppositional culture in her work:

> My undergraduate and graduate work trained me to think oppositionally, to structure my articles and book chapters as a series of binary discussions that proceed through nuanced contrasts: first, describe other scholars' theories and perspectives; second, demonstrate the limitations in their views; third, explain why my views are superior to those of other scholars; fourth, persuade readers to reject the other scholars' views and embrace mine. (p. 2)

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2. My use of the term critical refers to anti-oppression work conducted informed by social structures of inequities. Within such work, lies interrogation (reflection?) of limits and possibilities of knowledge making, of engaging in actions, and considering possibilities for challenging dominant discourses and their effects in relational, generative ways.

3. I refer to critiques to imply the deconstructive work that can be done to break apart modernist, structuralist, humanist assumptions that could leave scholars who work from critical race theory, critical feminist perspectives in a state of paralysis since it is difficult to work from these premises knowing the existing deconstructive critiques (see Hatch's concern discussed later in this paper). All paradigms are intersected with problems and potentials and we could use a multipronged approach to have meaningful dialogues about large-scale inequities in education and actions that would address these inequities. Complex problems are messy and might invite imperfect solutions, but it is only with sustained, introspected, and refined efforts that these problems could be legitimately understood and addressed.

Keating details a practice is valued and privileged in academia, where scholars who can deliver the best oppositional, critique-driven work, are celebrated as strong academics and philosophical thinkers and thereby reinforcing such oppositional thinking. Post-oppositional thinking allows for holding contradictory ideas in one space, without the need to situate one argument better than other even if such an argument aligns best with our epistemic and ontological positions. In this way post-oppositional onto-epistemologies align well with Minh-ha's (1989) notion of blurring the boundaries between self and other, while still holding space for the unique ways in which self and other could function. Minh-ha states:

> I/i can be I or i, you and me both involved. We sometimes includes, other times excludes me…you may stand on the other side of the hill once in a while, but you may also be me, while remaining what you are and what I am not. (p. 92)

Thus, Minh-ha's illumination of self and other creates space for oppositional discourses as well as what could possibly be beyond such discourses. Therefore, post-oppositional theorizing invites us to think non-oppositionally without demonizing oppositional discourses. Post-oppositional thinking could trigger relational methods amongst other viable, realistic alternatives. Because the problems facing education are complex and ever evolving, the solutions then would have to also be dynamic, multidirectional, multidisciplinary, multivoiced, provocative, and multipronged. In other words, if we are to fight against social injustices in education, how do we do so theoretically, methodologically, and pragmatically, without being co-opted into the binary of the oppressor and the oppressed? What if the moves towards correcting social injustices are only just breaking some walls in the master's house, with the master's tools, without dismantling the master's house as described by Audre Lorde (1984)? I do not want to engage in breaking down the walls of one room in the master's house and cheering ourselves along and any other friend who could do the same, when the entire master's house has an infected foundation.

Additionally, in this paper I discuss two exemplars where post-oppositional theorizing has been enacted methodologically to address issues of inequities in education. I align with Henry Giroux (2009) as he states the role of theory in critical work is where "Theory…becomes a transformative activity that views itself explicitly political and commits itself to projection of a future that is as yet unfulfilled" (p. 35). This relationship between theory and praxis is also one that supports how Darder et al. (2009) situate Freire's perspective on theory and praxis when they state, "Cut off from practice, theory becomes abstraction or simple verbalism. Separated from theory, practice becomes ungrounded activity or blind activism" (p. 13).

My goal is not to exaggerate a binaried division between theory and praxis or discourse and materiality. Instead, I highlight the perceived polarized divisions in the current moment of qualitative research to illustrate that such boundaries are illusory and superficial. I promote an ethics of care and practice that support onto-epistemic shifts to explore interdependent relationships between thought and materiality that focuses on injustices in education.

Post-Oppositional Onto-Epistemological Framing

Recently, scholars have called for more post-oppositional (Keating, 2013) ways of doing academic work and engaging contemplative approaches in higher education (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). AnaLouise Keating (2013) describes *oppositional consciousness* as representing

a binary either/or epistemology and praxis that structures our perceptions, politics, and actions through a resistant energy—a reaction against that which we seek to transform. Oppositional consciousness can take a variety of modes and occurs both inside and outside academic settings (classrooms, journals, etc.). (p. 2)

Within this framing of oppositional consciousness, *post-oppositional consciousness* could include expanding and interrogating binary discourses, as well as observing the ways an oppositional stance develops within ourselves, creating our individualized resistances, which eventually manifests outwardly in our actions and experiences. The process of interrogation or expansion does not require opposing or dismissing other scholars' work. Instead, it introduces a space in which we can either find shared ground, or observe and seek to understand why oppositional stances are manifested within us, without resistance. One way to conceptualize post-oppositional consciousness is to ask, "How can transcending oppositional discourses create space for the possibility and the hope that qualitative research can inform social justice work?" Such a question inspires me to look for choices, to imagine beyond opposition, and to forge solidarity with those with whom I might disagree.

Oppositional discourses have fueled qualitative research for decades (Bloch, 2004; Feur, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002; Lather, 2004; Lincoln & Cannella, 2004; Peshkin, 1993). Qualitative researchers have had to justify how their work matters and the value of qualitative inquiry itself. They have had to legitimize such inquiry against the current backdrop of positivist and post-positivist understandings of scientific knowledge, which not only drive funded knowledge construction but also discipline the process and the products of dissertation research, publications, and tenure and promotion eligibility.

Somewhere along the way, we gave ourselves permission to conduct inquiry that was not simply quantitative-lite—developing an ever-evolving, flexible understanding of qualitative research that privileges paradigm proliferation (Lather, 2006). However, in our efforts to be inclusive and diverse in our approaches, we have witnessed bitter oppositional discourses within qualitative research. We have seen such conversations within the contested understanding of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2009); in current criticisms of efforts to code data (Pierre & Jackson, 2014; St. Pierre, 2011); and among those who find such critiques of coding to be reductive, monolithic, and exclusionary (Saldaña, 2014).

J. Amos Hatch (2006), former editor of the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, perceives the postmodern/poststructural turn in qualitative research to be paralyzing for some who conduct empirical work. Hatch (2006) argues:

It is no wonder that many scholars who count themselves as qualitative researchers felt incapacitated by the powerful ideas of a post-everything world. Notions such as the crisis of representation, the elevation of deconstruction and the end of ethnography send shivers down the spines of many postpositivist, constructivist and critical-feminist researchers at the same time they are compelled to take them seriously. Many of these folks fought on the front lines of the paradigm wars of the 1980s and 1990s, and now they and their students feel trapped between retrenched positivist forces on the one hand and stinging poststructuralist critiques on the other. (p. 405)

Imagining critiques from other paradigms, even if the assumptions of those paradigms were vastly different, generated a call for a change in our thinking about every aspect of qualitative research. This included our epistemology, ontology, theoretical framework, methodology, methods of data collection and data analysis, representation, ethical tensions, subjectivities, and reflexivity. Hatch (2006) reflects, "Those who continue to think of qualitative research as data-based, carefully executed, systematic inquiry may find themselves with less and less space in which to operate" (p. 405). Yet, there is no reason why systematic, data-based inquiry would become theoretically void; perhaps the discursive space for valued theoretical application can be broadened to include expanded ways of thinking and working with high, mid, and micro level theories.

Hatch (2006) expresses concern based on the proliferation of *post-* discourses, noting the increasing number of scholars who discuss/critique research, theory, and data analysis without conducting a single empirical study (beyond their own dissertations), and who teach their students to do the same. Hatch does not demonize all *post-* work, but worries that "the next generation of qualitative researchers will have been well prepared to theorize, deconstruct, and critique but have no clue how to design a study, collect data and generate findings from a thoughtful analysis" (p. 406). Yet, a question arises, reflecting on the call of this special edition issue, how could future researchers move towards a critical praxis, if somehow their efforts are more invested in engaging in critique than in praxis? More importantly, how do we understand materiality of human suffering and oppression in educational spaces if we only engage in the abstractions and critique of such abstractions?

Norman Denzin (2008) addressed Hatch's (2006) concerns from the perspective of a scholar who fought paradigm battles, contributed to paradigm proliferation, and pushed mixed-methods discussions to be more responsive to non-dominant paradigms of inquiry. While Denzin did not agree with all of Hatch's ideas, he, too, expressed concern that the perceived discursive divisions between various paradigms of inquiry in qualitative research would damage our enterprise. He responded by calling for an expanded big tent. Denzin (2008) stated:

> We cannot afford to fight with one another. Mixed-methods scholars have carefully studied the many different branches of the poststructural tree (Creswell, 2007). The same cannot be said for the poststructuralists. Nor can we allow the arguments from the SBR[4] community to divide us. We must learn from the paradigm conflicts of the 1980s to not over-reach, to not engage in polemics, to not become too self-satisfied. (p. 321)

Over the past decade, I have witnessed factions arise as qualitative research becomes divided between politicized academic camps. At one of the most widely recognized and celebrated international qualitative research conferences, two threads of conversation occur repeatedly. One is focused on high theory. The other focuses on making theory accessible for empirical work on the ground, and questions the pragmatic feasibility of some theoretical stances. For example, during a high theory presentation, a high school teacher asked the presenter, "I like the way you use high theory to critique qualitative research, but how could I take this back to my school and apply it when we are bombarded with accountability measures, where our performances and raises are not calculated just based on our work, and every day it seems we are being pressurized even more and more. How would I take the ideas you have presented and put it to work in a pragmatic way?"

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4. Scientifically Based Research.

The presenter immediately launched another critique based on the premise of the inquirer's question, deconstructing the binary relationship between theory and praxis and cautioned the inquirer that it would be dangerous to maintain a division between theory and praxis. However, there was no discussion about how one might build a bridge between theory and praxis since there was already an interest in putting theory to work in a problematic context in education. This division, or at least the perception of this division, creates oppositional discourses, including a false dichotomy and perhaps an inaccurate assumption of the mutual exclusivity of theory and praxis.

While practically all disciplines honor oppositional thinking, I return to Hatch's concern presented earlier about the role of *post-* discourses. *Post-* discourses are always already oppositional because they are set up as critiques. Put another way, postmodernism critiques modernism, poststructuralism critiques structuralism, posthumanism critiques humanism, and so on. Therefore, these discourses are in relation to that which they critique. The critiques offered sometimes create a trapping for reductive binaries, situating the critique-driven discourse as the better, more desirable discursive choice between itself and that which it critiques. For example, these oppositional discourses create binary relationships between insights and ambiguity, essentialized truth and multiplicity, core self and multiple selves, authenticity of being and multiplicity of becoming, and so on.

Therefore, the argument forwarded is that the call to generate insights after conducting interpretive qualitative research is somehow incommensurable with the ambiguity that qualitative research could provide within its inquiry process and within the research report created. Why would insights need to be just this one fixed thing? Why cannot an insight be about ambiguity, multiplicity, and keeping things in play? Similarly, criticisms are forwarded about essentialized truths to favor multiplicities. If I think in multiplicities, follow my rhizomatic tracings of thoughts, and I feel that this is key to who I am and what I do, and it is my onto-epistemological framing, then can I not argue that this notion of impermanence is a part of my essential truth and core being? In addition to blurring the boundaries between the binaried discourses, my point here is that we live our lives in such complexities and ambiguities that language is not sufficient to capture them all. However, if we use our materiality to inform the ways in which we can make language perform, then are we not restricting ourselves within binary driven oppositional discourses where meaning is fixed on one side of the binary and it multiplies and becomes permanently deferred on the other side? Our dynamic lived realities do not portray such clean divisions. Therefore, truth telling and social justice work need to somehow come to terms with the need to be agentic and yet not be limited by a structure within academia that makes us fight against each other to claim intellectual victories, and collect accolades.

If I am being completely honest, I must acknowledge the pain I have experienced as a result of seeing fellow academics express caustic oppositional stances to one other, as well as from my personal experiences of standing in opposition to my colleagues. While we can agree intellectually that differing perspectives need not be mutually exclusive and value the inclusion of diverse perspectives, we are still called upon by journal editors and publishers to demonstrate that our scholarship is somehow better, superior, sharper, smarter, more sophisticated, more nuanced, and so on. With such arguments we prove our work to be worthy of legitimization through publication, which informs how we will teach and mentor the next generation of qualitative researchers.

Simply put, we create our niches with like-minded scholars. We cite each other's work. We begin to create a field. The moment we do so, we distinguish ourselves from that which currently exists, because our scholarly insights need to be different, unique. They must produce—at the very least—some kind of new knowledge, in some kind of new way. By creating our very own

niche-based field, we create our own communities of practices (Lave & Wenger, 2003) and our own normative discourses. Yes, we can critique grand narratives that once marginalized our perspectives. But once we have gathered our own people, we somehow un/willingly create our own centers, narratives, and citational privileges. We thereby construct our own oppositional stance against those who are not us: who do not think like us, who do not read the same scholarly works we do, who do not use the same continental philosophers we do to work theory into data analysis…and so on.

However, I acknowledge that oppositional sensibilities have intersected several of my scholarly and teaching moments. I have always promoted, supported, and contributed to anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-heteronormative, anti-classist, and anti-imperialistic discourses as part of my social justice teaching and research agenda. Yet like Keating (2013), engaging in resistance against social injustice has situated me squarely in oppositional discourses. I do not intend to imply that I should not be an advocate for these social justice agendas. However, I have noticed how drained of energy I have felt, locked in battle with my crusading agendas. The more time I invest in engaging in such oppositional critique-driven discourses, the less time I can invest in understanding the ways in which my truth-telling could connect to praxis, to empirical work, to building bridges across various stakeholders interested in challenging certain structures of inequity in education.

Keating (2013) describes an alarmingly harmful consequence on our being when we look at how fragmented parts of ourselves retain oppositional energies, even when we are not in a battlefield, because we have internalized and created high value for an oppressive system that rewards us for engaging in oppositional discourses.

> Our internal fragmentations—our intra-divisions, as it were—have their source at least partially in the oppositional energies (and the dichotomous thinking behind them) that the groups used to combat social oppression. We can't turn off the negative energies once we remove ourselves from the battlefield. We take these energies with us, into our work, our homes, our minds, our bodies, our souls. They eat away at us, devouring us as we direct this oppositional thinking at one another and at ourselves. We fragment. We crumble. We deteriorate from within. And then we regroup. We begin again. And on to the next corrosive battle. (p. 9)

It is this repeated practice within and outside academia that prevents us from truth telling and showing up in ways that are authentic to our being since there is a danger of being battle-fatigued, (and by that I do not mean one fixed way of being and knowing, but rather attending to the iterative ways in which we understand our ontological assumptions through our ever-evolving multiple relations and practices) to do the social justice work that we are inspired to do. I consider this a deep ontological trapping and therefore, I am using post-oppositional ontologies to engage in truth telling and social justice work to expand our practice beyond oppositional intellectual victories in the name of critical scholarship. Truth telling, for me, involves writing from within subaltern ontologies, rather than writing about it. My focus in truth telling is the need to highlight interrelatedness of being and a radical interconnectedness in our collective struggles and liberation while attending to internal fragmentations. Such an agenda would motivate me to scrutinize my wounds caused by fragmentations and move towards an ongoing effort to heal while projecting such effort outwards. In other words, if I am fragmented by the binary discourse of the oppressor and the oppressed, then a post-oppositional approach could be to blur that division within me, to look for the reasons why my survival and freedom are contingent on what the oppressor validates and find

ways to imagine myself as whole, beyond the actions of the oppressor and project those ways outwardly. Perhaps then we could ask questions like, how do we challenge oppressive structures without being trapped in a binary relation with oppression? How do we inform our strategies of survival, organization, and progress driven by an agenda that is deeply healing instead of being an iterative cycle of energy drainage?

Truth-telling then is driven by fearlessness, a willingness to be vulnerable to criticisms, and travel in and out of multiple worldviews to refine an agenda against inequities and injustices, by building bridges across oppositional discourses, or at least not allow oppositional energies have a draining effect on one's being. And in doing so, truth telling cultivates the conditions for destabilizing established belief systems within one's being and the ways in which such beliefs manifest outwardly.

Anzaldúa's Nepantlera and Nepantla

To answer such questions, I have sought refuge in Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987/1999) notion of *nepantlera,* one who is comfortable moving in and out many worldviews without needing to stay in any one. Keating (2013) explains that a nepantlera "represents a type of threshold person or world traveler: someone who enters into and interacts with multiple, often conflicting, political/cultural/ ideological/ethnic/etc. worlds and yet refuses to entirely adopt, belong to, or identify with any single belief, group, or location" (p. 12). Anzaldúa's use of the term *nepantlera* is an adaptation of a commonly known Náhuatl word, nepantla, which means "in-between space" and includes ontological, epistemic, and ethical dimensions (Keating, 2013). Anzaldúa shares her understanding of nepantla:

> Nepantla is the site of transformation. The place where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited from your family, your education, and your different cultures. Nepantla is the zone between changes where you struggle to find equilibrium between the outer expression of change and your inner relationship to it. Living between cultures results in "seeing" double, first from the perspective of one culture, then from the perspective of another. Seeing from two or more perspectives simultaneously renders those cultures transparent. (Anzaldúa, 2002, pp. 548-549)

The conceptualization of nepantlera and nepantla invite us to think of how liminal spaces (Turner, 1964) could create states of confusion, ambiguity, while attending to paradoxical ontologies, giving rise to nonoppositional threshold theories and practices. Combining Turner and Anzaldúa's concepts of liminal and nepantla spaces, one could see that these spaces could be intersected by multiple states of consciousness, thereby creating conditions for contradictions, tensions, messiness, and chaos. A nepantlera who travels between multiple worldviews and goes in and out of the thresholds of such worldviews remains in a state of flux, negotiating and holding contradictions in her being, in her consciousness, and yet understanding the relational context of such contradictions from her threshold traveling. Ontologically, a nepantlera, then, would have to exist beyond binary oppositional consciousness simply by the notion that based on a nepantlera's travels to multiple worldviews, and being able to hold multiple contradictions in her being, a binary oppositional consciousness would be incongruent to her ways of being and knowing. This state of being can also be destabilizing (transformative?) where ideas and identities could be challenged to make

room for new possibilities, or simply to make room for something yet to be known and imagined. A nepantlera would have to evaluate previously held beliefs, theories, assumptions, values, subjectivities while holding multiple contradictions to understand what is no longer part of her consciousness, what does not serve her knowledge making and understanding of her existence in multiple threshold spaces and her travel in between the nepantla spaces, and calibrate her onto-epistemological understanding to reflect a shift in her thinking.

Another way I think about the liminal nepantla spaces for nonoppositional consciousness is to imagine this space existing between (among?) multiple worldviews. A nepantlera travels in between these worldviews also known as the nepantla spaces. The nepantla spaces can then become a space to take stock of what is learned from the different thresholds that the nepantla traveled. And while taking stock, the nepantlera might be outside the bounds of restrictive discourses, frameworks, and assumptions, understanding and informing her in ways that exceed such restrictions.

I would consider many colleagues who are qualitative methodologists and educators as nepantleras. We move in and out of different worldviews of our students, our colleagues, handle multiple contradictory perspectives, find shared grounds even in difference, and understand our own resistance and accommodation to these constellations of worldviews and the ways in which we might shift in the liminality of these worldviews. In other words, we are in constant movement, in a state of shuttling, sometimes experiencing deep pain in isolation if we are not entrenched in any one specific worldview, therefore, not being an insider of any spaces in which we travel. However, existing in such flux could be what is needed for us to cultivate nonoppositional consciousness in order to deal with critical issues of inequity and injustice in education so that we can think beyond polarizing, politicizing binary discourses, and find ways to organize together to engage in and organize actions that challenge a large set of networked structures of oppression affecting education.

From such nepantleric traveling, one could possibly see the self in fragments, as s/he interacts with thoughts, ideas, beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives of each worldview. These fragmented parts of self may be transient or may have some value to the nepantlera for the nepantlera to remain attached to certain fragmented parts of her as part of her identity development. Note, nothing in this discussion of self, or perhaps core self, denotes any kind of understanding that is fixed in time and space, that is static. From a nepantleric ontology, traveling between multiple worlds and existing in liminality are not reflective of some static core, an unchangeable thing, but an experience of connecting relationally, materially, ontologically, and even spiritually with fragments of ourselves in whatever forms they have shown up. Anzaldúa (2009) discusses how even in such fragmentation one could have a sense of wholeness, incorporating movement, shifts, fluidity, contradictions, tensions, and chaotic messiness of understanding of self in relation to multiple worldviews. She says:

> You say my name is ambivalence? Think of me as Shiva, a many-armed and -legged body with one foot on brown soil, one on white, one in straight society, one in the gay world, the man's world, the women's, one limb in the literary world, another in the working class, the socialist, and the occult worlds. A sort of spider woman hanging by one thin strand of web. Who, me, confused? Ambivalent? Not so. Only your labels split me. (pp. 45-46)

This is how I see nonoppositional, non-dualistic ontology functioning, when one can understand and exist in multiple relations and practices and still have a sense of self that is not splintered into

isolated, decontextualized fragments. And by understanding such ontological moves, notions of authentic being, core self, or essence of self could be reimagined and reconceptualized in fluidity instead of fixed in static and reductive understanding. Then, if we extend this kind of way of being and knowing in the world to other people, we can imagine social justice initiatives and actions that are anchored in such truth telling where we start from a place of understanding complexity of lived experiences in its various forms and functions, its relational contexts and practices, and the ways in which we can engage our various states of consciousness with such materiality for aspired out-comes.

I want to underscore that the discussion of post-oppositional framing is not intended as a critique of oppositional thinking and oppositional discourses. Instead I reflected on how opposi-tional discourses functioned for me as I was bearing witness to an ever-proliferating culture of oppositional discourses within and outside of academia. However, as a nepantlera, I recognize that it is a perspective, and many people are indoctrinated in such oppositional ontologies. Perhaps by presenting a post-oppositional framing I could extend an invitation to those who are drained by engaging in and witnessing oppositional discourses and their manifestations. What I especially want to avoid (although I might already be complicit in it) is to situate post-oppositionality in some kind of hierarchically superior position to oppositional discourses. Instead, like Keating (2013), I want to gently prod, pull, extend, and expand these oppositional academic discourses in qualitative inquiry to inform the social justice work we could do in education.

Dropping my Anchor Here and Building Bridges

In this section I discuss two projects, which I conceptualized as bridge building work with various stakeholders in education as a nepantlera, and discuss the limits and possibilities of such engagement. In doing so, I highlight that there may never be any kind of flawless engagement, or an engagement where all tenets of some high theory could be appropriately enacted, but that should not stop us from engaging in the material consequences of inequities. I do not represent these projects as some kind of utopia to glorify my efforts. Instead, I offer exemplars of the struggles, the messiness, the chaos, and the hope for a better future while we engage and collaborate.

Reimagining the Accreditation System for K-12 Schools in Kansas

For the last two years I have been part of a project in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner to reconceptualize how accreditation of Kansas schools ought to look like if we did not make standardized testing the only and the most important marker of performance and ac-countability. I became part of the project when the project was already in motion. I mention this to highlight that I was not in the room when decisions were made in terms of how the project would be initiated, designed, or executed. I entered the threshold of this project much later. The commissioner's office decided that they would conduct town hall meetings across Kansas, speak with every possible representative stakeholder they could think of in these town hall meetings including higher education professionals, business owners, community college professionals, stu-dents, parents, administrators, and teachers. They asked all of these stakeholders what skills would each of them value in a student who graduates high school. The Dean's office in the College of Education, the department chair in Educational Leadership, the commissioner's data analyst, the deputy commissioner, and I became involved in the project while they were conducting their town hall meetings.

They conducted and documented conversations from over 2500 people, and they needed my help in analyzing the data. I remember one chilly winter day in Kansas, I was drawing paradigm charts for the deputy commissioner and his data analyst to explain truth, reality, rationality from different paradigms to see where we are onto-epistemologically with this project and where we would then travel to in terms of our relationship and understanding of truth, meaning, realities, and so on. We discussed the worlds in which they would have to travel and make the work intelligible. The deputy commissioner and his data analyst discussed that they would have to deliver a presentation to the commissioner and to the members of the Board of Education. Therefore, even though they have these paradigms to which they were exposed, this would not be something they could communicate back to their stakeholders. This was a clear moment of tension where we could not cross into each other's thresholds and could not bridge our differences.

We moved on to discuss how we would manage the volume of data and how we would use NVivo, a qualitative data management software, to do so. We talked about how this software will not do the analysis for them in the same way that SPSS would, but it would allow them to sort and chunk data. As they went through the process of moving in and out of data and trying to create some interpretive understanding that was congruent to their sensibilities and intelligible to their stakeholders, we engaged in deep discussion about how we would like education to perform for students, teachers, and administrators, and how we would like policies to support our aspirations and not stifle them. This was a moment where we crossed thresholds into each other's worldviews and discovered shared ground.

Given that I came into the project while it was already underway, I was perhaps not in full alignment with the way the project was set up, and could immediately attend to the opposition that rose in my being. I also knew I did not want to be part of something superficial, that offers lip service, but really does not transform or work towards a social justice agenda. And I knew that I get upset when people think they could engage in qualitative research without any formal training, as long as they just "talk" to people. Therefore, while I was extremely inspired by the spirit and intentions of the project, I was less than inspired by some other aspects of the project, especially when understanding of qualitative research seemed minimal or an assumption was there that doing qualitative research should not be too difficult since it did not involve number crunching. There were several moments where I found myself at the tension of having to teach qualitative research in a one-hour meeting and being inspired by the broader spirit of the project. The deputy commissioner eventually enrolled in our doctoral program and began to take qualitative classes with me as some of his first classes in the program. And he continues to assert that his town hall meetings would have been quite different had he known more about qualitative research then.

This project is currently in ongoing, but suffices to say, that there was some preliminary analysis conducted on the conversations collected and presented to various stakeholders. These analytic insights were compared to the national discourse on skills of millennial learners and how values are being placed on some skills more than others. I am currently working with the deputy commissioner to help develop an evaluation system that would take into account what was said in the town hall meetings to develop a new accreditation system for Kansas. This system can include standardized tests as an indicator, but it would only be that, one indicator, instead of the one used to create inequities in our education.

I present this as an exemplar of contestations and bridge building work towards social justice in education for various reasons. First, to highlight the obvious, various education professionals are either in collaboration with or support of this initiative taken by the Commissioner's office. Next, there is bridge building in terms of our simultaneous travels in and out of each other's

worldviews about educational praxis, qualitative research, and intelligibility. For me there were moments of tensions when I was explaining the role of qualitative methods to push against the corporate neoliberal agenda driving education. In those moments, we discussed the purpose of schooling and evaluation that would align with the purpose of schooling that the town hall attendees highlighted, instead of what the corporate stakeholders wanted. In our own ways we were doing the bridge building work while discussing our ontological assumptions. We did not always have shared ground, but we forged some. On some issues, we could not find shared grounds. But given that we were aligned ontologically with what needed to happen as a socially just move in our education, we engaged in transforming an oppressive system through some kind of post-oppositional framing of our work even when we might have not been in agreement with each other.

I am also not naïve enough to think that we can solve all ills of educational policy enactment and inequities by this one move. However, in being able to move within and outside of each other's worlds, we were able to understand our ontological messiness (though we did not term it that way in our discussions), we were able to work with the discomfort of incomplete data and that much of what could be known was still invisible to us. Additionally, I did not think that I could engage them in a discussion about relations and practices of voice, the subaltern nature of voice of minoritized participants, or the ways in which we could reflect on what was gained and lost in hearing these voices in town hall meetings. There were pending deadlines for presentation, therefore, we were constrained by time. I was unable to offer readings on theory that could help or make such expectations critically pragmatic or insert theory-driven understanding of data within spaces of K-12 praxis. However, I was able to help them work through the tensions about remaining an "objective" researcher, when meeting such a goal is an impossibility grounded in illusory understanding of inquiry. We talked about how futile it would be for them to claim in their presentation to their stakeholders that somehow they were separate from what they were presenting. I said that their humanity could not be divorced from their human interactions with the participants or the textual data. Eventually they agreed and we moved forward.

In our bridge building work, we were meeting each other at the thresholds of each other's worldviews and in the liminal spaces. Our assumptions and beliefs were at times in contradiction to each other (for example needing to present objective, generalizable data), and while I was uncomfortable with some of the contradictions, I was also comfortable with the idea that we could be part of something that would help schools, teachers, students, and parents, and move our educational practices forward beyond test-score based understanding of its goodness. What we tried to cultivate was this space of holding multiple contradictions together and orient ourselves outside of binary, oppositional, corrosive, mono-thinking onto-epistemologies and discourses. We did not reach a full resolution, but one that was pragmatic due to the looming deadline for presenting information to the stakeholders. Given that this is an ongoing project, I look forward to our unfolding together to see where we travel to and what messiness comes into our awareness next.

Bridging between Tribal and Public Education

I met Alex in my first introduction to qualitative research class. He is white, has short blonde hair, blue eyes, in his early 30s, married with two daughters. One day after class he waited to talk to me. It was then he revealed to me that he had indigenous Osage heritage and that he was quite involved in his tribe and shared a deep generational history with his tribe. His father is an elder of the tribe and he is strongly committed to maintaining his cultural identity within his tribe. Yet, he recognizes that because he looks and passes for white, he enjoys privileges that several of

his tribe members do not. He wanted to do his dissertation research on some kind of bridging of tribal and public education.

For the next year or two, I continuously sent him books and papers to read on indigenous education, de/colonizing epistemologies, methodologies, and education, and anything else I thought would be relevant. Alex tends to devour everything I send him and then engages me in deep discussion. Once we spent three hours talking about third space and whether or not he is located in third space. I asked him to read Gloria Anzaldúa's work on mestiza consciousness and on her theorization of the nepantlera, so that he did not have to simply conceptualize a third space but can move in and out of multiple spaces as he tried to do the bridge work.

The more readings Alex completed, the more he was able to engage in discussing what he wants to study. Like many other students, I began to notice that as his paradigms were shifting, his language use changed too. As Alex began to engage people in discussion about third space, settler colonialism, decolonizing epistemologies and his desire to build partnership between tribal and public education, my department chair and the Dean of the College of Education offered him a full time position at the university for him to structure his role in any way he wanted to start this partnership with whatever support he needed from us. This was a proud moment for me to witness.

Alex is currently writing, working, thinking, talking, and building partnerships. While we tried to work on his dissertation, we talked about the ethics of storytelling and conducting research in partnership with his tribal elders. There was one critical moment of tension where Alex was paralyzed by the expectations of qualitative research. We were discussing how Alex might present his findings and he told me that no amount of fictionalizing details and using pseudonyms would prevent people from being identified in his study, because his tribe was unique in the region and would be easily identifiable. He would either have to conduct a superficial study or not conduct a study involving his tribal members in any way. Next, Alex informed me that culturally, he was uncomfortable telling stories of his elders, because that was not his place to do so. He would be misaligned with his ontological awareness of his place within his tribe. And he certainly would not try to engage in any kind of knowledge-making from such a place of unbalance. This was a moment of tension for both of us and we did not come to any resolution other than the incommensurability of the expectations of Western, institutionalized qualitative inquiry and indigenous sensibilities. Perhaps a bridge building effort could have been attempted, but it came with the risk of co-opting or coercing indigenous people in Alex's tribe and neither of us was comfortable even entertaining such possibilities. So we had to abandon our belief systems that perhaps if we had good intentions, we should be able to conduct inquiry in any space, especially in spaces where we might be cultural insiders.

Alex has not started his dissertation research yet. However, in one of our chats the other day, he informed me that he is considering accepting a suggestion I made earlier and conduct an autoethnography. He does not feel misaligned ontologically or epistemologically to conduct autoethnography. In fact he is beginning to feel free to bring all parts of his selves, his multiple contradictory perspectives from his threshold travels into various worlds and worldviews into one place. He is able to consider his onto-epistemological stances and understand that everything that pours out of his being and knowing is what allows him to be in a state of flow from where he can create, write, and travel deep into various states of consciousness. This is not necessarily a resolution of the previous ethical dilemma, but an invitation for Alex to look at the fragmented ways in which various ethical dilemmas function within him as he takes on the role of a nepantlera in his dissertation and professional partnership work.

I provide Alex's example as a way to demonstrate how someone can work with oppositional, nonoppositional, and non-dualistic ontologies while struggling and attempting to engage in bridge-building work. Alex's willingness to engage with his internal states of contradictions and modes of consciousness resonates with Anzaldúa's argument of wholeness even in fragmentation. Alex's essence (which is fluid), if we can even use that term, is a sense of self that comes from crossing multiple thresholds of several worlds. In his liminal nepantla spaces, he sits with the knowledge he gained from his threshold traveling and uses them to create projects that demonstrate the shifts and transformations in which he is engaging.

Alex is aware of the fact that he was introduced to multiple contradictory perspectives, ways of being, and knowing in his nepantleric travels. And yet, emanating from his onto-epistemological perspective, he has been willing to engage in a critical social justice partnership project in education, which is material, which makes him take a position, where he drops his anchor, to do the generative, relational, bridge building work, and which is reflective of his negotiation of his states of being and knowing. Discussing Alex's work also demonstrates how attending to oppositionality could open up spaces of possibility. Alex understands the atrocities his people experienced and how schooling has been severely affected by multiple forces of systemic oppression. Yet to challenge the status-quo, Alex is trying to forge a partnership path, aware of the co-optation dangers, while remaining in close dialogues with every stakeholder. The authenticity that flows from these states of multiple, contradictory consciousness leads to imagining a social justice project that is beyond oppositional engagement.

I do not want to present post-oppositonality as the utopian possibility without perils to engage in social justice work in education. In fact the work of a nepantlera is hard. The traveling between multiple worldviews, without belonging in any one permanently can sometimes become isolating, confusing. Sometimes bridge building efforts are co-opted. Sometimes bridge building efforts include some folks and exclude others. Those excluded then create their oppositional discourses against the bridge building work. And yet if we want to connect our theoretical and empirical spaces with praxis we have to engage materiality in all its possibilities and problems. Engaging in materiality of suffering and oppression is not easy and yet it is easy to get dirty when one is in the trenches of this work. There could be energy draining relations and practices while conducting this social justice work, resulting in fatigue. And for that reason it is imperative that we attend to oppositional discourses within in relation to dominant, critical, resistant, public discourses, so that we can attend to the ways in which we build up our resources when we wish to challenge status-quo and dismantle networked structure of oppression. It is also worth mentioning that non-oppositionality does not exclude challenging status-quo. In fact it is a key part of social justice agenda to challenge status quo. However, non-oppositionality invites us to think beyond binary dualities, to understand when we are in co-opted relations and practices (breaking walls in the master's house, instead of breaking down the master's house), instead of engaging in oppositional discourses that drain our own resources.

Concluding Thoughts

In this paper, I have discussed the ways in which post-oppositional framing can allow an engagement with social justice work in education, without being involved in energy-draining oppositional discourses. I have advocated for such framing in qualitative inquiry, by using two exemplars where post-oppositional framing became a necessary path to social justice oriented projects. Part of my motivation to do this work stems from being disappointed and drained after having

to bear witness the acrimonious discourses within various politicized academic camps in qualitative inquiry. To do some bridge building work, I have tried to blur some of the binary relationships that are being forwarded in various discursive spaces within qualitative inquiry. To that end, I have opened up constructs such as core self, authentic self, analytical insights that were previously conceptualized as a fixed, static, reductive idea with more fluid and porous notions that are always already a site of constellation of multiple contradictory worldviews. Perhaps then, we would not have to engage in acrimonious oppositional battles within ourselves and focus on ways in which we can build bridges to engage in social justice education projects that are authentic to our beings, in whatever ways we want to conceptualize and understand that.

Dropping my anchor here (the title of the paper) refers to the need to engage in some truth telling, instead of being in a constant state of deconstruction, since I am able to do so with this large all-powerful intellectual critique hammer that I am able to wield. Often deconstructive qualitative scholars are prolific with breaking things apart, but nothing is built back up from the ruins of that which was broken. Perhaps there is a fear that making a commitment to build something can again be broken down. However, we live in critical times. Our education system is continuously being plagued with various restrictive, oppressive discourses that continuously create inequities. Those of us who are interested in engaging with material suffering of our fellow human beings, will have to do some truth telling, take some positions, and drop their anchor somewhere, albeit temporarily. The dropping of anchor will not be clean or always in full alignment with some kind of high theory. Instead, there will be moments where we could and would get co-opted. There would be moments where forging shared grounds might not be possible. There would be moments where the chaos and contradictions of multiplicities could lead to compassion and motivation fatigue. Yet this work needs to be done to illuminate the connection between discourse and materiality in intelligible ways in various educational spaces so that we could organize actions and offer counternarratives to dominant discourses that blame those who suffer from inequities for their own suffering.

I have used two exemplars to demonstrate how unclean, messy, unfinished this work can be and how different stakeholders can bring about different needs where the spirit of the project and the execution of the project might not align well. However, for me, the key is that if we are not in the room when critical questions in social justice issues in education are being raised, then we are excluded from the discussion about critical solutions. For that reason alone, I advocate for the bridge building work that comes from being aware of how one can be a nepantlera, traveling through multiple worldviews and liminal spaces without a need to belong in any but crossing various thresholds. And yet again there are perils in bringing into awareness a nepantleric state of consciousness that is intersected with isolation, pain, lack of belongingness, confusion, and chaos. Despite all of that, if there is work to be done, then there needs to be three key questions answered: How do we engage in social justice education from critical perspectives without being co-opted (is that even possible)? How do we bring a post-oppositional framing to challenge the status quo, when we are ontologically in opposition to the status quo? How do we bring to bear a bridging between onto-epistemology, inquiry, and praxis between various stakeholders who might not internalize the merits of these bridge building efforts?

Engaging in social justice work requires us to imagine. We have to imagine beyond restrictive discourses, relations and practices. We have to see the change and work towards the change in whatever way we can. I am reminded of political activist Arundhati Roy's conceptualization of resistance against the empire.

If we look at this conflict as a straightforward eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between Empire and those of us who are resisting it, it might seem that we are losing. But there is another way of looking at it. We, all of us gathered here, have, each in our own way, laid siege to Empire. We may not have stopped it in its tracks--yet--but we have stripped it down. We have made it drop its mask. We have forced it into the open. It now stands before us on the world's stage in all its brutish, iniquitous nakedness. (Roy, 2003, p. 122)

It is this kind on non-dualistic thinking that I have tried to privilege in this paper where we would transcend from the either/or, win/lose, binary relationship driven discourses to engage in building resistance that could have the power to dismantle the status quo. This reframing does not necessitate infighting amongst qualitative researchers to outperform each other in our theoretically or methodologically nuanced dances. Nor does this reframing necessitate that all of us have to work in the same way as we lay siege to the empire. However, if we could really utilize our talents, our intelligences, our collective communities in which we belong, to engage in non-dualistic understandings of social justice in education, make some truth claims, what kind of possibilities would we produce in the next ten years?

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Intimate Inquiry: A Love-Based Approach to Qualitative Research

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Abstract

Academics have a hard time talking about the role of "love" in social research, and the lack of a working definition for its meaning only partly explains our difficulty. The more substantial barrier is our tendency to think about "research" not as a careful exploration of specific social, intellectual, or methodological problems that bear on the everyday circumstances of real people, but as the product of observable and replicable processes, of science. Love, many would argue, has nothing to do with this. I beg to differ. In previous publications, I have offered a radical counter narrative of the possibilities that a broadened view might enable. Using my own research experiences and efforts to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, I sketched the beginnings of an "intimate" approach to qualitative inquiry that is grounded in feminist theory, governed by an "ethic of love," and expressed as "love acts" for the individuals whose lives our work aims to shape. Here, I reconsider, push, and refine these ideas with greater attention to telling truth and offering practical wisdom.

Keywords: intimate inquiry, love, qualitative research

For the past several years, I have been openly wondering about what it means for educational researchers to do their work from a place of love (see Laura, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014). As I understand it, love—the material and conceptual pursuit of our own or someone else's humanity—is as sorely needed in the field of education as it is in the city streets. My earlier writings on the subject were attempts to articulate that point and to tentatively build the framework for a love-based approach to qualitative studies in education, what I have called "intimate inquiry." In this article, I rethink these ideas with greater confidence and clarity by addressing the following questions: (1) What is intimate inquiry? (2) What are the assumptions and methods of intimate inquiry? (3) What are the implications of invoking love in qualitative work, especially for critical, truth-telling educational researchers? For context, though, I offer a prefatory note about my entry into this methodological tradition.

Turning Toward Intimate Inquiry: A Preface

Not long ago, when my then-fifteen-year old brother, Chris, began flirting with the idea of dropping out of school, I was finishing a pilot study of student discipline policies in one of Chicago's public high schools. I spent most of my days immersed in recent research on the ways in which 'common sense' discourses, school practices, and educational policies work in concert to

facilitate the movement of poor youth/youth of color from schools to alternative educational placements, the streets, and prisons. Because I desperately wanted Chris to stay and do well in school, I began to draw upon these literatures and perspectives for insight into his lived world. I revisited each scholarly piece to search for explanations of his past social and academic experiences, prophecies about what laid ahead for him, and indications of what I could have done in that moment to change the course of his life in some educational way. I looked at programs that could assist him, talked to people, and read more material. In November 2007, I practically moved back into my parents' home to be near my teenage brother in the midst of his decision-making process as it unfolded. Almost intuitively, the researcher in me began documenting much of what occurred in my family home, talking with my kin casually and sometimes more formally about how they made sense of my brother's social and academic lives, and retrieving and analyzing many of his personal artifacts to contextualize what I observed and heard.

In the meantime, our parents sought professional support—from psychologists, medical doctors, social workers, and teachers—to help Chris and themselves. I ran across and eventually recommended to my mother Helen Featherstone's (1980) *A Difference in the Family: Life With a Disabled Child*, a book about families who love, live with, and share the impact of a child's "difference." In this text, Featherstone describes some of the advantages and limitations that such professionals generally bring to the tasks of advising parents and describing their experiences. "As for the strengths," she writes,

> many of these professionals have received some training in thinking about feelings and human behavior and in evaluating evidence; most have also worked extensively with parents and children and thus may have learned to see common themes and to set individual responses in some larger perspective. (p. 7)

On the other hand, "a professional sees each family from a certain distance, and his or her understanding is in some sense theoretical" (p. 7). Lacking an insider's view, neutral credentialed parties watch, listen, and make inferences, focusing "so intensively on parents[']" vulnerability that they [may] miss their strengths," or worse, blame parents for all family problems (p. 7).

While, as far as I know, my parents never felt compelled to admit culpability under the care of their professional advisors, Mom and Dad inevitably pointed their fingers inward. They held themselves accountable for Chris' problems because they lead busy working lives. They mined their memories for inconsistencies and delays in applying discipline, for relying upon different and sometimes competing approaches to childrearing, for providing Chris with what he wanted as much as what he needed, and for failing or being unable to respond to their son's complaints about uncomfortable experiences in school. Then, all of a sudden, they would move from self-reproach to blaming Chris and the burden of responsibility would shift to his shoulders. His flunking grades were attributed to his presumed laziness, "bad" attitude to a spoiled identity, active nature to the naughtiness of his gender. His impatience with teachers was connected to his attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and growing behavioral adjustment record to his dire need to fit in, at all costs, with kids of his own age who come from vastly different backgrounds than the comfortable, middle class, suburban lifestyle that he is afforded. The tension at home was so thick that I could taste it.

Against this backdrop, in January and March of 2008 we endured the loss of both maternal grandparents and a close cousin, sudden tragedies that seemed to amplify the frequency and intensity of Chris' academic and behavior troubles at home, at school, in our surrounding community,

and with the law. By now, these problems had lingered unabated for nearly six years. To cope with the grief of our kinfolk's deaths, and to track the issues that my recurrent visits raised, I kept a journal and catalogued the details of critical incidents, the settings in which they took place, the conversations that occurred within and/or about them, and my own reflections on it all. With no histories of usage to ground academic work so close to home, it took me nearly one year 'in the field' to begin publicly articulating the questions that I developed about my little brother's life pathway, and with their permission, to frame certain aspects of my family members' personal lives as researchable educational problems. Unfortunately, my intervention proved to be too little and too late. As a final prerequisite for enrollment in the U.S. Department of Labor's Job Corps, his educational alternative of choice, Chris withdrew from high school altogether in October 2008. He was sixteen.

While most researchers appear to select their research projects—melding personal interests and skills to determine a particular topic of research, which, in turn, appears to guide the research methods employed in its service (Stacey 1991)—I began with the end in mind. I knew that I wanted to study the school-leaving experiences of black middle class youth because I needed to work with, learn more about, and create useful knowledge for my own immediate family. Born in the heat of a furnace, and thrust into action on the basis of urgency and conviction rather than cosseted reflection on research question and design, my intimate dissertation project *chose me*.

Defining Intimate Inquiry

The most obvious reason for calling my methodological approach "intimate" is that it reveals a researcher's positionality—who the researcher is in connection with the people under study—and the nature of their affiliation. In a brief and concise way, it emphasizes, as dictionary definitions of the term do, a familiar and significant relationship that would exist even if the research did not. In another sense, this term announces the way that intimate inquirers see the world and how they believe that we come to know themselves and others within it. Nobody schooled in qualitative work will be amazed to learn that intimate inquirers think people, especially young people, are active thinkers, movers, and shakers of the world, and that each of us has the capacity to make sense of our experiences, to claim expertise on our own lives. Intimate inquiry is grounded in the idea that the fastest way to the get to the "truth," that is, the reality that a person constructs, is to delve close to the source of the quandary—to ask the simplest questions and pay scrupulous attention to what the individual thinks that he or she is up to—and in light of the person's social surrounds, to interpret (to the best of our ability) what these meanings tell us. At the same time, "intimate" refers to the personal and emotional aspects of life on the "inside." Not to be confused with the distant and voyeuristic cliché about "self as instrument" of research, here "intimate" signifies the concern, the passion, and the individual will to do that drives engaged and political work.

Curriculum theorist and educational philosopher, Nel Noddings (1992), reminds us that "to care and be cared for are fundamental human needs" (p. xi). When we "care" we worry about what happens to people in our everyday lives and we attend to them—to their individual needs, perspectives, and interests—by asking the basic questions: who, what, where, when, and why. For Noddings, the answers to these questions may bring a level of consciousness to the ways in which we receive, recognize, and respond to others and ourselves. Noddings urges educators and scholars to organize our work around caring—for human affections, weaknesses, and anxieties—to know people in all of their particularity. This, of course, is the easy part. Our challenge, then, is to connect what we know with what we do.

"All spheres of American life—politics, religion, the workplace, domestic households, intimate relations—should and could have as their foundation a love ethic," an obligation to act on behalf of our own or another's well-being, cultural critic bell hooks (2000) wrote in her book *All About Love* (p. 87). "A love ethic," hooks (2000) argues, "presupposes that everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well" (p. 87). The world that hooks envisions is one in which individuals choose to "love," meaning that we "learn to mix various ingredients—care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication" in ways that protect, enhance, and sometimes alter our own and other people's lives (p. 5). When we understand loving practice as the foundation of our research, then we may begin to establish the conditions for the production of valuable knowledge that shapes and informs the way we think, speak, and act. hooks (2000) tells us,

> we do this by choosing to work with individuals we admire and respect; by committing to give our all to relationships; by embracing a global vision wherein we see our lives and our fate as intimately connected to those of everyone else on the planet. (pp. 87-88)

For intimate inquirers, hooks' words are an invitation to do research not on "the subjects," but with "*my* people"—family members, neighbors, colleagues, students—and to treat research participants with the regard and reverence that we extend to our own kin.

If our research purpose is "solidarity," as I am implying, then we should consider "using data collection and analysis methods that involve accompanying, co-construction, and co-interpretation," Corinne Glesne (2006) suggested in her presentation given at the *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*. For Glesne, being in solidarity, that is, "working with others in a research endeavor determined by others" needs and perceptions in conjunction with our own, requires that scholars make two basic commitments: 1) to abide by the terms of community and 2) to promise hospitality. In practice, to do right by community means that we open and demystify the research process, and are willing to take the time for shared decision-making. We participate in and become as much a part of "family" matters as possible, with all of the responsibilities that this entails, and "we consider our academic communities and how our connections, constraints, and obligations there have implications for the people with whom we do research." We also have an obligation to be generous, she insists, to "give freely of ourselves"—love, vulnerability, authority, and abundant resources—"in the research process…to share what it is that we can do, not as an imposition, but as service determined in conjunction with others."

This kind of work is necessarily messy and moving, publicly affirming and personally empowering, humanizing and unabashedly interventionist, precisely because it is governed by a different set of values. The intimate inquirer works under the assumption that the process and product of his or her scholarship has real consequences for the lives of three-dimensional human beings, the researcher him- or herself included, not for imagined "others" somewhere out there. hooks (2000) explains,

> In large and small ways, we make choices based on a belief that honesty, openness, and personal integrity need to be expressed in public and private decisions…[and] we learn to value loyalty and a commitment to sustained bonds over material advancement. While careers and making money remain important agendas, they never take precedence over valuing and nurturing human life and well-being. (p. 88)

Intimate inquiry is, as the term suggests, unavoidably subjective, that is, personal, person-centered, and perspective-based, a fundamental characteristic that draws many researchers within its folds despite vigorous calls for detached scholarship that reinforces normative notions of authentic academic work.

Methods of Intimate Inquiry

Intimate inquiry is organized around three activities: witnessing, engaging, and laboring with and for the individuals whose lives our educational work aims to shape.

Beth Brant (1994) reminds us that, "Who we are is written on our bodies, our hearts, our souls," and that in each of us there is a desire to be known and felt. To be acknowledged and validated, and to have our histories confirmed—to be witnessed for "what has been and what is to be" (p. 74). *Witnessing*, as an act of love, involves the deliberate attendance to people, seeing and taking notice of that which they believe is meaningful. Fears and desires are situated in a sense of past and future, and experiences become the fabric of time and space. To witness is to validate the existence of stories, and to protect their places in the world. Becky Ropers-Huilman (1999) writes: "We are acting as witnesses when we participate in knowing and learning about others, engage within constructions of truth, and communicate what we have experienced to others" (p. 23). For Ropers-Huilman, witnessing is qualitatively different from observing people as a research strategy.

When we show our love for others by witnessing their lives, we are complicit in active and partial meaning-making about those experiences, up close and personal to the phenomenon of collective interest. While it is impossible to really know other people or completely understand what is happening to them, the act of witnessing is an invitation to pay attention, to reflect, to learn about lived lives, and to explore rationalizations of people's experiences.

There is a particular urgency for the act of witnessing within the context of marginalization or wrongdoing. Being a spectator of calamities taking place both near and afar is a quintessential part of the modern experience. I think of the recurring theme in slave narratives and the writings of Holocaust survivors who describe the trauma of public indifference to their struggles—the persistent feeling of invisibility and being made mute—as equally egregious assaults. At a minimum, bearing witness to the pain of significant others is the act of validating and advancing their fundamental rights to peace, justice, and humanity.

We do this by watching closely in the particular contexts in which our people try to make sense of things. We listen intently and provide a captive audience for critical reflections on the tough questions of guilt and responsibility. Dori Laub (1992) warns, "the absence of an empathic listener, or more radically the absence of an addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish…and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story" (p. 68). For Laub and for me as well, the act of listening is vital to the production and co-ownership of people's truths. But it is also the obligation of engaging the conversation that is central to the process of intimate inquiry.

Engaging points us to the posing of problems and the highlighting of contradictions that are inherent to all experiences of the peopled world. To engage is to put people in deliberate dialogue around the mundane, the taken-for-granted, the whispered, and the hushed. When we engage, we publicly name what we have witnessed and draw upon multiple vantage points—including the lenses of the inquirer herself—for a fuller and more complicated understanding of people's issues. Through engaging, we aim to establish the conditions for personal empowerment. Patti Lather (1991) reminds us that this means we create the space for "analyzing ideas about the

causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of our lives" (p. 4). Of course, providing the opportunity for people to speak for themselves and with others may not in fact lead them to do so, but there is an obligation, in a Levinasian (1998) sense, on the part of any researcher who witnesses and engages loved ones' lives to take some course of action.

Writing as testimony—an incomplete account of events—is a considerable part of carrying out this task. The narrative becomes a vehicle through which we come to know other people and ourselves by implication; it reflects not merely a distant other but the social relations in our own environment. The love-based ambition for writing lives is a certain kind of reception that involves empathy and responsibility to think differently about the world, what Megan Boler (1999) refers to as "testimonial reading." Constructing a text that might nudge this sort of intentionality and introspection is a labor of love. *Laboring* encompasses the mental work of writing, but also the physical labor—the work of the hands and the bodies—of sharing available resources.

Implications and Challenges of Doing Intimate Work

Academics have a hard time talking about the place of love and other components of intimacy in educational studies, and the lack of a working definition for its meaning only partly explains our difficulty. The more substantial barrier is our tendency to think about "research" not as a careful exploration of specific social, intellectual, or methodological problems that bear on the lives of real people, but as the product of observable and replicable processes, of science. Love, many would argue, has got nothing to do with this.

Now, as it has for the last five decades, positivistic conceptions of science have dominated education discourse and divided the research community along predictable lines of epistemological and methodological approach: quantitative camps of scholars, with their emphasis on the separation of facts and values in the interest of objectivity are pitted against their more "touchy-feely" colleagues, many of whom use a range of exploratory and qualitative methods. A case in point is what education philosopher Kenneth Howe (2009) calls the "new scientific orthodoxy" in education research,

> which has been codified in the National Research Council's (NRC) *Scientific Research in Education* (2002) and reinforced in its subsequent *Advancing Scientific Research in Education* (2004) as well as in the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) *Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications* (2006). (p. 428)

The authors of each of these recent reports articulated and promoted a cohesive framework for scientific inquiry in education that distinguishes "research" from other kinds of intellectual pursuits and summarily excludes "challenges and alternative views from the conversation about education policy and practice" (Howe, 2009, p. 437).

If the exclusionary effect is an unintended consequence of explicating scholarly norms internal to the education research community, it is also a fiscally responsible consideration of external factors. Purging the education enterprise of "(so-called) research that consists of some combination of subjective, ungeneralizable, partisan, hypercritical, incomprehensible, useless, speculative conjecturing" (Howe, 2009, p. 438) in order to claim the mantle of science provides "a means for education research to retain or enhance [prestige, credibility], support—including financial,

from its patrons, such as the federal government and private foundations" (Howe, 2009, p. 433). Within this context, embracing intimacy in education research is beyond suspect, it is bad for business.

The implications of such thinking are far reaching, as the space and tolerance for social inquiry that is committed to documenting the complexity of human lives, oppression, and resistance shrinks, and the risk of silencing, invisibility, and unemployment strengthens pressures to assimilate to dominant expectations of researcher practices. Ethnographer Harry Wolcott (2002) puts the point pithily: "If you don't do or present research as our self-appointed standard-bearers feel it should be done or presented, they [your colleagues] may do *you* in" (p. 167).

Intimate researchers in the academy are poised to reconcile a kind of duality akin to W.E.B. DuBois' (1903/1990) "double-consciousness," in which blacks in the U.S. at the turn of the nineteenth century were compelled, he argued, to preserve perspectives as both Africans and simultaneously as Americans. We are at once committed to developing research processes that are more ethical, sympathetic, collaborative, useful, and connected to "real" lives, and at the same time, I think, struggling to maintain productive "academic" lives in the interest of legitimacy, collegial respect, and professional marketability. It is an inconvenient duplicity, a path fraught with contradiction and conflict that leads to self-doubt—of our autobiographies, intentions, and our own intuitive sense about what counts, who matters, and what questions are worth asking. Too often, scholars negotiate this tension by relegating themselves to prefaces and footnotes, or downplaying controversial features of their work—in their writing and on the conference circuit – for example. The flip side of what indigenous researcher Stephanie Daza (2008) refers to as "covering," the ways in which we go about fitting in or playing roles in order to be perceived as legitimate scholars, is "preaching to the choir," circulating critical and innovative work within a cloister of polite company. Meanwhile, the youth whose lives our research is meant to shape bear the imprint of our politics.

Many scholars may not be certain of exactly *how* to embrace intimacy in academic research or they may have ideas about how but choose not to *do* so. To suggest, however, that there are not ways in which we *can* bring love into our scholarly pursuits is a dangerous idea. It is also a familiar trope.

Around the time that I was nearing doctoral candidacy in my third year of graduate school, I enrolled in a research design seminar led by a senior scholar at a large university in the Midwest to facilitate the trudge toward a rough draft of my dissertation proposal. We began one particular class meeting by soliciting feedback to oral sketches of each student's project, and much of these exchanges focused on underscoring the significance of research questions or clarifying justifications of methodological choices. When it was my turn to describe the study of school-leaving experiences that I had crafted around my own family members' everyday lives, I read key passages of my problem statement and summarized other important elements of the study's design. Following what I perceived to be an awkward moment of reflective silence, my professor asked, "How will this project move beyond navel-gazing? I mean," he went on, "no one will base policy decisions on your brother."

I had anticipated some anxiety on the part of my colleagues and professors at the university upon choosing to name my little brother as the subject of a dissertation project about high school dropout among the black middle class. I expected cautionary tales about the personal and professional costs of vulnerability in academic scholarship, advice on navigating the complexities of ethics and intimacy in fieldwork, and passing references to the ongoing debate about validity in qualitative research. In retrospect, I too wondered about some of the problems that pursuing an

academic project arising from my personal life might pose, especially at such an early juncture in my academic career. My worries, though, focused squarely on how to move back and forth between a provocative familial story and its broader contexts—in my writing and lived experiences—not on the suitability of my methods, the worth of my study, nor the legitimacy of my status as a researcher.

Emergent, yes, but the research design did not, as far as I can tell, lack historical or structural perspective. Of course, my family stood to benefit most from our work together. By mapping the ebb and flow of our emotions while we discovered more about what was going on with Chris (and us), we could have immediately approached transformation in ways that created healthier and happier spaces to learn and dwell. However, rendering my brother visible, documenting his marginality, and transforming his story into accessible texts (Gluck, 1991) served to fulfill a purpose beyond my family: to directly shape how he and other black youth are perceived and treated in societal and intellectual contexts. Still, as firmly as I believe in the significance of my work, I second-guessed my judgment and went back to the drawing board to devise two variations of the original research design out of fear that my teacher's prediction about the fate of my project would bear strange fruit. Each of the three versions of my dissertation was rooted in an intimate perspective, and each raised questions about the necessity of new methodological and academic interventions in real lives, and grappled with the politics of "personal" work within the academy. What differentiated the studies were the methods and ethics that I attended to, the kinds of dilemmas and possibilities that each version implied, and the progression with which I repositioned my brother at the forefront.

Variation #1 – Covering: a Study of Assimilation

Given my intimate approach to authentic intellectual life and explicit research purposes, writing my brother out of the story appears to have been a visceral response to the feedback that I received about my proposed work. At the time of course, realigning my dissertation's methodology with normative notions of legitimate interpretive research felt like the most reasonable methodological decision to make.

In March 2008, I first considered redeveloping on a larger scale an exploratory study that I completed five months earlier for the purposes of a research methods course in which I enrolled. I designed the pilot study to create dialogue within a Chicago public high school of my former employment around its policies and procedures related to student climate. The school's discipline policy and the juxtaposition of administrators' goals with student perceptions of its meaning were of particular interest. The three-tiered system of behavior management, euphemistically referenced as the "Incentive Program," sorted the student body into colored groups: Gold Group, Red Group, and Orange Group. Membership to one group garnered a different set of rewards or penalties than belonging to the others. All students began each term in affiliation with the Red (default) group, and depending on whether or not detentions were accumulated and served at the end of each school week, could have moved between groups throughout the year. Belonging to the Orange Group, the bottom rung of the hierarchy, brought notable consequences: these students could not receive passes out of class, were required to display an orange identification card on their person, could not enter the dining hall during mealtime until all Gold and Red Group students made their selections, and could not participate in extracurricular activities. Connection with the Orange Group carried, as well, significant ideological connotations: students and staff alike recognized them as the "bad kids."

I learned about the discipline policy during my tenure as a tutor for the school's college readiness program, but I had real reservations about engaging its politics. For one thing, my critical lens was abuzz within the walls of the "ivory tower" and on the school grounds where I worked. I saw the Incentive Program as particularly problematic—a deliberate effort to monitor, sort, and contain troublesome black adolescents who "are discursively constructed as under-achieving, violent-prone, education-aversive youth (i.e. the dregs of society, who are in need of discipline and restraint), [and] the imposition and presence of enforcement policies [as an effort] to 'civilize their untamed spirits'" (Brown, 2003, p. 127). I was also hesitant to support the policy because so many of the Orange Group students were my students, a relationship that enabled me to closely observe the stigma attached to membership and students' varying reactions to it. I cringed every time students seemed to play into others' expectations of "bad kids." I hurt when students self-segregated, assuming that behavior problems proved intellectual inaptitude and apathy. I celebrated in the moments of resistance to these meanings. At some point, it occurred to me that I cared about them because, in circumstances and physical characteristics, they reminded me so much of my brother. Within a few short months, I left the job on good terms to pursue with vigor the roots of my intellectual curiosities that these young people managed to clarify for me. It was November 2007 and the beginning of my home/work with Chris.

I returned to the school shortly thereafter to satisfy the mutual interests of the principal and me: the principal sought feedback on the Incentive Program that would inform the school's improvement plan and I wanted to fulfill the fieldwork requirement for my methods course on a topic of genuine interest and significance. I constructed, with much help from the principal, an interpretive study that helped us understand the meaning that the Incentive Program had for students, and especially their thoughts about the Orange Group. I used notes that I jotted about my own observations and information shared during separate semi-structured interviews with the assistant principal, who created the discipline system, and one Orange Group student, and a questionnaire completed by 78 students to find out their impressions of the Incentive Program and the Orange Group. The study found that while students understood the "official" goals of the discipline policy, as articulated by the administrative staff and widely distributed written materials, they believed an "unofficial" agenda to be at work. Specifically, in contrast to the administrative perspective of the Incentive Program as a means of forging accountability and responsibility, maintaining order and consistency, and discouraging students from displaying behaviors that garnered detentions, students believed the policy to be racially discriminatory and damaging to their social and academic prospects.

Together with a classmate who helped with data analysis, I wrote the final report in the jargon that would jibe with an audience of peers, who practiced traditional qualitative research techniques, and the school's administrative team. The presentation of my pilot study to the methods class received positive reactions, and seemed to move people in the ways that I anticipated. Many of my peers asked questions about my time in the field. Some probed for more of the participants' insights. A few expressed anger about the Program itself. After all, my professor, a highly respected scholar in the field of educational leadership suggested that I think about pursuing this project beyond the course. Based upon the study's findings, the school acted upon an aspect of its discipline policy that seemed to bear the most explicit racial undertones. As opposed to filing into the dining hall only after their peers got first dibs, students who have unattended detentions now eat lunch together in detention hall, an infanticible change to the Program in the broad scope of issues it raised, but a sizeable victory for the youth under its charge.

This exploratory study uncovered narratives of "bad kids" as expressed in a single public high school's discipline policy. For just a few months, I worked to expand the pilot as an alternative version of my dissertation to include a larger sample size, additional in-depth interviews, and more observational time at the school, but the limitations of such a study seemed to outweigh its advantages.

First, as a former employee and familiar face, my relationship to the school's administration and students may have enabled me to take observational field notes, speak informally with students and staff, and generally move within the school building without arousing alarm to a researcher's presence or unnecessarily influencing the natural research setting. On the other hand, the administration's intimate role in shaping and facilitating the execution of the pilot and dissertation studies may have framed me as an apparatus of administration. This perception would not have been far from the truth, as the administration's necessary involvement in the study, particularly in my quest to (re)locate former student interviewees and seek new ones, may have infringed upon my attempts to protect students' anonymity. Or to take a different angle, if I developed rapport and trust with the students in my role as principal investigator, but changes to the Incentive Program since the exploratory study have remained miniscule, then resistance or lack of motivation to buy-in to the dissertation's value, to volunteer participation, or to share forthrightly would seem reasonable.

Second, on any given week, the pool of Orange Group students from which to select participants would be large, variable, and lend itself to random or probability sampling, but I am not interested in causal relationships, predictions, or extrapolating findings to other situations, time periods, or people. These purposes are aligned with a positivist paradigm, whereas my goal is depth of meaning-making for students in their social spaces.

Third, I may learn much about what it is like to be considered a "bad kid" through an additional series of in-depth interviews and long-term observations of classrooms and detention halls, but this would neglect other important contexts outside of schools that contribute to the social ecology of discipline.

Fourth, a questionnaire allowed me to impute response items, reduce them to numeric values, and disaggregate the data, but there was a serious problem with this. Even if the students or data gathered from other sources informed the subjective response items, the responses that I imputed in the pilot survey or may have inserted in an additional questionnaire for the dissertation are my own constructions, not the students' own words. "Bad" kids' own stories are what I am after.

Fifth, and most important to my purposes here, conducting this version of the dissertation certainly would have appealed to the sensibilities of conventional qualitative researchers, but my authentic interest and immediate concern was in interrupting my brother's journey along the school-to-prison pipeline, and I simply did not know how studying the Incentive Program could assist Chris in that moment. Even if it was only for three months, each passing day that I split energies between my continued work with the family and my attempt to expand the pilot into a dissertation, transferred acquired knowledge across projects, and combined those discourses and managed the contradictions among them, was not only crazy-making (Heald, 1991), but a waste of valuable time. By now, my brother and our parents were looking into two alternative education programs, both of which required his willingness to leave school and our home altogether for serious consideration. The dissonance of my attempts to be in two places at once, intellectually and often physically, and the rapid progression of my brother's decision-making process brought me back to where I began.

Variation #2 – Undercover Lover: A Study of True Lies

In May 2008, I redesigned my dissertation to focus on Chris and the meaning our family made of his school-leaving experiences, but he would appear in the final write-up of this version as a composite character in a story based upon my experiences as an educator and my observations in schools. Merging my brother's life, as gleaned from the observational records that I accumulated during my family visits, with my memories of other black youth with whom I have worked in schools, would allow me to do the interpretive work that I originally proposed in way that draws attention to its partiality, and conceal the relationship that caused pause. Of course, incorporating narratives of self and fiction presents a different set of problems, for it is one thing to posit the personal or explicate my sense of self in another's story, but quite a different matter, it seems, to recapitulate the selective experiences of others in highly personalized tales of my own lived world. Critics of self-studies have accused many scholars of giving up on writing about the "other" by writing, instead, about themselves, and the legitimacy of stories that are fictitious as to person and perhaps place, but accurate as to practices and beliefs, has been debated (LeCompte, et al., 1992).

Having conceded that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) would find incredulous my family's communal efforts to protect its rights and privacy, especially for the sake of my teenage brother, and either disapprove of the project or turn it "into a bureaucratic nightmare" (Wolcott, 2002, p. 148), creatively disguising their identities was vital to keep the research afloat. In the end, by determining that my study did not meet the definition of "research," the IRB did nothing, except dilute my argument for the legitimacy of alternative forms of presentation in the minds of some academics.[1]

Exemption from the requirements for the protection of human subjects, "a series of steps and procedures designed ultimately to protect the institutions themselves" (Wolcott, 2002, p. 148), does not, however, provide relief from the guidelines of my own moral compass or accountability to the people who have agreed to participate in this project. As Wolcott (2002) makes plain and I firmly believe, "Ethics are not housed in such procedures" (p. 148). There are important ethical dimensions to intimate fieldwork and the publication of the details of my formal study, for which there are no clear prescriptions for handling, but that need to be acknowledged, troubled, and worked through.

The complex nature of our relationships, for instance, necessarily wedged an element of coercion. In addition to the potential personal and educational benefits of this project, I suspect that their willingness to participate in this study was grounded, in part, in the interest of my own educational progress. Undoubtedly, completing the proposed dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctorate, the highest degree held by anyone in our family, was a common goal and publishing "the book" will be a shared accomplishment. Therefore, concern for my well-being may have infringed upon their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Unfortunately, beyond reminding the family that they reserved this right, I was at a loss of strategies to deal with this issue. Small, but steady monetary incentives may have also compelled family members, especially Chris, to participate. Our individual and whole-family meetings sometimes occurred at various places outside of our home (e.g. over coffee or dinner), the financial costs of which I often assumed; but, as long as they knew that I provided compensation for their time, and not their responses this arrangement should not have posed a significant problem.

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1. The specific definition of research under 45 CFR 46.102(d) is: Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to *generalizable knowledge* (my emphasis).

Another good example of the ethical dimensions of my intimate work involves the issues of informed consent and confidentiality. Although I did not draft and attain family members' signatures on an official permission-granting document, my intent to draw upon information gathered in my capacity as a family member (e.g. sibling and daughter) *and* in my role as a researcher (e.g. participant-observer and interviewer), was always transparent. This does not mean that I used my familial "access" in ways that were deliberately stealth, sneaky, or deceitful, such as rummaging through our family home for personal artifacts to advance my research agenda. However, this does mean that the family was aware of the converging character of my identities and agreed to grant me broad discretion to record observations and descriptions of relevance within and beyond our formal or scheduled talks.

To be clear, note taking and reporting are two different actions, and I did not ask the family for free-reign authorship or permission to write anything that I wanted about them. As interpretive work often calls for, this study was collaborative at every opportune juncture. At least monthly, I disseminated copies of working drafts of the dissertation and met with the family to "member-check" or solicit feedback about the accuracy, completeness, and fairness of my treatment. Chris himself was satisfied with the developing drafts. Many of his exploits that I thought he might want deleted or at least subdued (stealing cars, breaking into houses, doing drugs) were unproblematic (Wolcott, 2002). His primary concern seemed to be that I might miss some important detail about such exploits that he deemed pivotal to any "book" about him. Otherwise, during these debriefings, we decided what not to disclose, to rid copy of sensitive information, and to fictionalize particular details, determinations that I would have noted in the final write-up. As the research progressed, however, and carving time out to reestablish expectations of and my respect for our privacy became part of the research process, we also began to question the usefulness of anonymity and to reassess the costs of candor. Six months into the development of the second version of my dissertation, together we redefined our own ethical code of behavior and decided to reveal ourselves to the public.

Going Public: On Uncovering

By October 2008, I had tired of finagling what we considered arbitrary methodological limits and my brother was on his way to live at the Joliet, Illinois Job Corps Center in the hopes of attaining a high school equivalency certificate and tile-setting apprenticeship. Participating in and conducting the research, and sharing my interpretations of the information that I gathered over the year with family in casual talks and in formal writings helped us communicate more frequently and intentionally about understanding one another and resolving tensions surrounding Chris' trajectory. Despite our work together though, Chris was convinced that even in his suburban, black middle class environment, public schools were too hostile, competitive, and isolating for boys like him, and that the family's efforts to keep him in this environment made us complicit in his school failure. This aspect of my research purpose, keeping him around long enough to earn a diploma, at this point, would necessarily go unfulfilled.

Having peered into my brother's life for one year in search of clues about how he understood his schooling experiences and how we—family members, educators, policy makers—could shape his life outcomes, Chris needed time and space to adjust to his new milieu and I wanted the same to write. Over the next four months after he left, I used the unstructured interview, journal and observational field notes that I accumulated over the year to construct a layered portrait of my brother, a black middle class school dropout and his social contexts. Even though I was able to

pull from a plentiful corpus of information to write, the story still lacked the insights of key family members who love and lived with Chris and Chris' point of view in his own words. From February to April 2009, in total I conducted and transcribed seven additional in-depth semi-structured retrospective interviews with each member of our immediate family, and when he was ready, which did not turn out to be until September 2009, Chris began authoring and sharing his own life history with me. While he wrote for the next two or three months, I gathered and analyzed documents from the two communities where he was raised to juxtapose his story with a picture of the local neighborhood and school backdrops that worked on and through him.

To be sure, the better part of nearly two years that I spent "working the hyphens" (Fine. 1994) in this intimate inquiry was complicated labor. Throughout "data" collection, I struggled to smoothly maneuver the thin lines between each of my identities (e.g. expert negotiator-supporter-child-peer-traitor-trusted loved one-sister-scholar-insider-outsider in my own home), and I cannot say with certainty that I performed any of these roles especially well. My researcher status, position to power, and relationships with participants not only produced multiple and simultaneous roles, but these issues surely had implications for what occurred in my presence, what I saw, and how others saw me. I engaged in casual family gossip with my sister and at the same time facilitated an unstructured interview. I answered telephone calls from a frustrated brother who simply wanted to vent and I wrote copious notes from the other end. I arranged times to "chat" with my mother, but felt awkward when she insisted that they took place in our museum-like formal dining room that only gets use on "special occasions." I formally interviewed my dad, but the transcript of this conversation was useless because of the background noise provided by the old-school records he played as we spoke. Doing this research provided the flexibility to wear many hats, but all in the family wanted me to put on each at different times and we could never predict (and I did not make it a practice of announcing) the moments when I swapped one in favor of another.

The intimacy between my family and me made "leaving the field" somewhat tricky as well. Typically, a researcher has a clear exit strategy, such as when research funding has exhausted, when the themes of interest seem to have fully manifested, or when one's welcome in the community under study has worn out. Because working from home is relatively inexpensive, our lives keep changing, and I am always welcome to stay, when to "draw a line in the sand" was a difficult decision to make. I mulled over when to make the transition from "researcher" and all of its associations back to "family member," and how do it in a way that did not give a sense of finality to or abandonment of the work that we constructed together. "Leaving the field," though, took on new meaning when at times, Chris would not answer my calls, return my text messages, or otherwise make himself available to me as a researcher, particularly when he was angry and worried that I was in cahoots with another family member. Oddly enough, our intimacy made me, not my brother, more susceptible to desertion. While his absence was often frustrating, I understood the need for a break. Being the primary participant, the center of the controversy, and the single source of insight about the under-researched school-leaving experiences of black middle class youth was a heavy load for such a young person to bear. I never perceived my home/work with the family to be exploitative or manipulative of my "access," but this was (and still is) something that I worry and converse with my family about.

Another one of my incessant concerns has always been the personal risks associated with our decision to write up the final version of this interpretive dissertation as an explicitly intimate methodology and unconventional approach to understanding school dropout. I knew that many audiences of people—education policymakers, education researchers, educators, parents, and youth themselves—connected to youth who are caught up in the school-prison nexus could use a

text that, as clearly and directly presented as possible, speaks to the broad significance of getting to know our kids in all of their particularity. Our parents' motivations for going public were as much about connecting with "fictive kin" (Stack, 1974) across the globe, relatives not by blood or marriage, but by social or economic relationships and reciprocal struggles to raise their sons as it was about dispelling the stigmatizing myth of "dysfunctional" black families, particularly as it impacts the efforts of black mothers. Chris too wanted to disrupt the dominant narrative of 'bad' black boys that is typically associated with his poor and urban counterparts, but manages to permeate class and spatial locations, and he figured that by baring all he could replace our mediated images with more realistic understandings of what it is like to be him. Still, I am apprehensive about my family's willingness to "keep it real" considering what such vulnerability can mean, especially later in my brother's adult life.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, multiple forces have continued to exert pressure on the academy in general and education in particular. As the call and federal funding opportunities for standards-based school reform repositioned the significance of 'scientifically based' empiricism in educational research at the fore, the place and tolerance for the kind of intimate social inquiry that I am proposing has dwindled. At this moment, eminent literary critic Edward Said (1996) notes, "the world is more crowded than it ever has been with professionals, experts, consultants" (p. xv). Yet even within academic circles, students and scholars who explore issues of marginality and invisibility, who invoke emotion and compassion in their work, and who challenge our "methodological imagination" are discouraged from critical research and practice (Fine, 2007).

Within this context, examining some of my experiences conducting intimate research with my own kin helps us see how and why some scholars "cover" (Daza, 2008) themselves and their work in order to be perceived as legitimate and academically viable. Through an examination of the three versions of my dissertation above, I attempt to problematize and complicate our views of what counts as academic scholarship and authentic forms of inquiry. The first variation is methodologically and ethically aligned with mainstream conceptions of authenticity for an imagined audience of traditional qualitative or interpretive researchers. The second variation is ethically, but not methodologically geared toward the standards of legitimate research that the IRB utilizes to make procedural determinations. The final version pushes us to consider the methods and ethics of authentic research as any engaged scholar would: as unabashedly passionate, participatory, personal, and political. Together, they raise concerns about the constructed nature of authenticity, and point to normalizing assumptions of legitimate research that unconventional scholars are compelled to negotiate.

Scholars are taught to confine our research to the norms of academic protocol, and to maintain separation of academic knowledge from the actual people whose lives bolster our professional livelihood (Luke & Gore, 1992). While my doctoral training was no exception, it was not until a senior professor called me out on attempts to connect prior research and abstract theories and perspectives to a single youth's real world experiences that I felt the pressures of these standards. In the course of (re)framing my dissertation to accommodate such demands, I not only became fully cognizant of the professional costs of breaking the rules, but also more attending to the intellectual and spiritual integrity of our texts. My brother's experiences and the process of coming to know him as a human being through his story makes us smarter about the lives of the young people who we claim to be educating, but that alarming rates of school-leaving at the risk of being consumed

by an ever-present prison industrial complex proves to us otherwise. When I reflect upon the purposes of, my places in, and the audiences for my work, I only regret that I did not begin sooner, not that I utilized my inquisition and resources to first try to help my own.

Intimate inquiry, in my opinion, may exemplify a variety of characteristics[2]:

- Identifies important problems (personal, social, intellectual, methodological) and poses questions that can be examined
- Generates, discovers, describes, and constructs new knowledge
- Explores, reflects upon, describes, and explains meaningful personal and social worlds
- Uses methods and strategies that can produce investigation of a particular phenomenon of interest
- Links research to relevant theory
- Tacks back and forth between local and broad contexts
- Fully discloses research processes and findings
- Explicates researcher and research values, purposes, commitments, and key background assumptions
- Encourages self-examination and critique
- Values care (knowing research participants in all of their particularity), love (acting on behalf of participants), and solidarity (working *with* participants in research endeavor)

Although my work adheres to these guiding principles, every methodological approach has practical, ethical, and political limitations, and I make no claims that any versions of my dissertation represent the only or best approach to intimate inquiry. In fact, I would worry about the consequences for education research and the landscape of the academy writ large if all of its (overwhelmingly white-American, male) scholars only worked on projects in which we have a personal stake of this particular sort. I do hope that this article helps other researchers grapple with different ways to research and to consider alternative possibilities for critical inquiry that really matters.

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2. R. Burke Johnson (2009) developed a set of guiding principles for conducting 'education science' that he argues is more inclusive and representative of research in education than those provided by the National Research Council's (2002) *Scientific Research in Education*. I have summarized and borrowed several of Johnson's principles in my own collection of characteristics that may help us think about notions of authenticity in education research.

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Toward a Methodology of Death: Deleuze's "Event" as Method for Critical Ethnography

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Abstract

This article examines how qualitative researchers, specifically ethnographers, might utilize complex philosophical concepts in order to disrupt the normative truth-telling practices embedded in social science research. Drawing on my own research experiences, I move toward a methodology of death (for researcher/researched alike) grounded in Deleuze's philosophy-as-method and his concept of event. I approach ethnographic research with this concept in mind in order to unpack the experiences of Latino immigrant youth activism during a critical ethnography in Chicago. I suggest that new ways of thinking with Deleuze in qualitative inquiry might offer a breakthrough/breakdown and death of systems of thought that position research subjects in limiting ways, ultimately arguing that Deleuzian "event" offers the possibility for the birth of new selves.

> *We were arrested. The handcuffs felt tight on our wrists. We claimed that space. I do activist things even though I'm nothing.*
> –Youth Activists, Amelia and Penny

Introduction

Koro-Ljungberg, Carlson, Tesar, and Anderson (2014) recently argued, "philosophy as method is an engagement, an ethical relationship with thought. Philosophy as a method brings theory into the practice and ontologies into the research processes" (p. 5). This ethical dimension of philosophy is also documented in ethnography. For instance, Stich, Cipollone, Nikischer and Weis (2012) claim, "qualitative research, ethnography in particular, is deeply personal" (p. 463). The deeply personal aspects of qualitative inquiry, and ethnography specifically, raise philosophical questions of method that are the "conceptual epicenter" of research (Smagorinsky, 2008). Further, Tamboukou and Ball (2003) have posited, "the status of the ethnographer is a major epistemological concern" (p. 2), suggesting the philosophical underpinnings that guide qualitative inquiry be considered.

In this article, I examine the relationship between ethnography and the philosophical and theoretical dimensions of qualitative inquiry, and offer an example of how to engage with theoretical concepts in meaningful ways. Further, I agree with the comments in this special issue that, "to be *critical* one must work towards truth-claims that disrupt the normative flow of common-sense;

critical work cannot replicate what is already known" (Kuntz & Pickup, 2015 *CFP*). Given this challenge, as a critical ethnographer who engages with post-structural theory, I wish to explore *how* one actually disrupts the normative truth-telling mechanisms that are so often promoted in social science research (Rodriguez, 2015a), and to problematize what Patti Lather (1991) has called the normative, and thus limiting, ways of "knowing" subjects in the research process.

Problematizing the *Critical* in Critical Ethnography

As I journey through the experiences of being a critical ethnographer, and consider what it means to engage in the inquiry process, I often gravitate toward poststructuralist theory for a few reasons. First, I have grown to understand that research is a process of knowledge production where the researcher retains power over that which constitutes "truth." This means that voices are heard and can go unheard in the research process and in the final product (i.e. narrative or publication), which is important to reflect upon as researchers make decisions about selecting interview participants or the passages that form the narrative. As I explain in the article, part of what it means to be *critica*l is to consider the voices of marginalized groups and the power structures that operate in society so whose voice is included and excluded in a critical ethnography is of value. Troubling me most is the way in which the word *critical* is often used without considering what it might mean in terms of researchers participating in the process of knowledge production and Foucauldian "truth-telling." That is, in my own research I reflected heavily upon my role as the researcher as I gathered data, listened to the stories of my participants, and constructed the narrative. Thus, to be *critical*, necessitates our willingness as researchers to de-stabilize our own position of power and to recognize that knowledge and its production are contingent, historically situated, and relational. In other words, to be critical, in a poststructuralist (Foucauldian) manner, is to problematize our *critical* stance.

Second, research and its phases of data collection and representation are problematic engagements. Regarding *critical ethnographic research*, the power dynamics engendered in the research process and the challenges of representation, highlight a crucial tension; to break this tension, I want to disrupt the normative and often superficial social science processes such as collecting data, providing a framework, and coding data for themes, in order to reveal something *new*. We researchers need to ponder epistemological stances and experiment with *new* concepts in a way to take on theorists like Gilles Deleuze and set "mobile" philosophical concepts (Masny, 2013) in motion.

Purpose and Argument

This article begins with the question: How do we think about critical methodology and inquiry, particularly in ethnographic research? I argue that to move beyond saying we do "critical work," researchers need to take new epistemological stances and reconsider knowledge production. I argue here that re-thinking notions of identity, subjectivity, and power through philosophical and theoretical concepts is a necessary first step. The second step is to pursue open-mindedness to experimentation in our thinking. Following these steps, we can then begin to theorize data in order to understand ethnographic spaces as sites of experimentation, contestation, and negotiation, where the breaking down of boundaries and of systems of oppression can occur (Deleuze, 1990; 1992; 1995).

In this article, I consider the work of poststructuralist philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1990; 1994) and his concept of *event* in order to theorize the ethnographic data from a study on youth activism in Chicago public schools during the historic school closures in 2012-2013. I argue that Deleuze's philosophy-as-method enables us to re-envision the purpose of research and its encounters as a disruption of normative knowledge production. I also argue that Deleuze's concept of *event*[1] enables us to break away from essentialist paradigms that govern our understanding of identities within marginalized groups. I finally offer an example from my own critical ethnography for how we might open up new spaces of thinking about ethnographic data collection and analysis.

A Genealogy of Ethnography

The first section of the article outlines my rejection of positivistic traditions in ethnography and provides a brief overview of how scholars define critical ethnography. I then explain how my critical stance was problematic and led me to disrupt the critical ethnographic paradigm by using the notion of event. To this end, I understand a relationship between ethnography and poststructural theory—that the two need one another perhaps. While I do not bypass classical ethnography, I begin with the assumption of classical ethnography's deeply problematic positivistic and modernist roots that speak of human activity through an *othering* process. Further, researchers have addressed the concerns of conventional ethnography in order to invent new *critical*[2] spaces, merging "critical theory," rooted in Marxist ideology, with the ethnographic context (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004, p. 3). From this perspective, definitions of critical ethnography expanded while remaining committed to "conventional ethnography with a political purpose" (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004, p. 4).

Classical or traditional ethnography was rooted in a positivist tradition that understood social reality as something that is "out there" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 47). In addition, classical ethnographers construct a story from the field that is considered an "objective" account of events as they occur in a discrete time and place (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This classical, traditional approach to ethnography was challenged by different paradigmatic approaches in qualitative research, such as the *critical* approach.

Next, I wish to define and then to problematize the *critical* in critical ethnography in relation to my own engagement with this methodological approach. To define it, critical ethnography adds a political or transformative angle to classical ethnography, a consideration of the researcher's positionality, and a consideration of representation of research subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Madison, 2012; Noblit, 1999; Quantz, 1992; Villenas & Foley, 2011). As a methodological approach, critical ethnography seeks an understanding of social life in order to consider power dynamics in society (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). What makes this methodological approach critical is that it allows researchers to investigate marginalized groups with the hope of effecting change through research. Moreover, Quantz (1992) argues, "critical ethnography's contribution to this dialogue lies principally in its ability to make concrete the particular manifestations of marginalized cultures located in a broader sociopolitical framework" (p. 462). The point is that the work of the critical ethnographer introduces the ability of researchers to critique the social world, or the "falsehoods" and inequities in society, as experienced by marginalized groups and expose the

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1. Hereafter, I do not italicize event. I refer to it in the article and each time it carries with it the assumptions and definitions from Deleuze's work.

2. I italicize the word critical in this article in order to signal that I am problematizing the word and what it means in ethnographic research.

power relations that underlay institutions and social practices in hopes of revolutionary change (Kuntz, 2015, p. 97).

An important component of critical research is that researchers can acknowledge that representations of reality are *also* embedded in power relations. For me, the use of the critical ethnographic approach initially allowed me to ask questions of my participants while also considering larger social, cultural, and political contexts that may also influence the ways in which they interpret and perceive their realities. For example, my research on Latino immigrant youth occurred in the context of national and political discourses regarding immigration as well as the ways in which social science research had previously and poorly studied them through deficit models of thinking. My intention was to account for the power dynamics that are a part of their context, including the dynamic of my role as researcher. However as I engaged with this methodological approach, concerns emerged.

As mentioned above, I wish to problematize critical ethnographic research despite my engagement with this methodological approach. I explain how I initially engaged with the critical approach and what it enabled me to think about during fieldwork. In my early ethnographic research, I utilized the critical approach as outlined by Quantz and other scholars discussed above with rich cases in order to achieve the answers to the study questions and to account for researcher positionality—since researchers are also embedded in the power relations. This type of reflexivity and self-awareness of the researcher is imperative for qualitative projects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Madison, 2012) and for researchers interested in working the "hypens" and the "ruins" or contested spaces of research such as those with the minoritized youth I worked with (Dimitriadis, 2001; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2002; Weis & Fine, 2004). To elaborate, my use of the critical approach directly addressed issues of power, control, and the ways in which identities are/were shaped by institutional labeling of youth from racial and ethnic minority groups. Labels such as "regular," "highly motivated," and "at risk" were subjectively ascribed to youth from low-income, minority groups based on teacher perceptions of abilities. The institutional ascription process of identity set up hierarchies in the school and perpetuated the "deficit discourse" about minority academic achievement (Rodriguez, 2015a; 2015b). Thus, the critical approach allowed me to consider the power dynamics involved in minoritized youth identity formation and teacher perceptions of minorities' abilities in school.

However, the critical ethnographic paradigms (e.g. Madison, 2012; Quantz, 1992) still operate in/through binary systems of reason and logic, positioning subjects as superior/inferior or dominant/non-dominant without attention to the layers of power embedded in particular contexts. For example, Madison's (2012) work actually uses the phrase "Dialogue with the Other" in the discussion of how to research participants (p. 8).[3] Viewing research participants as "other" as part of the methodological orientation is problematic and such an articulation of participants as "other" reifies the very ideologies that the critical paradigm seeks to break from. Further, the positioning of research participants as "other," potentially limits our ability, as researchers, to question the "truths" that are produced about them by institutional labels. In my own research, I often failed

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3. To contextualize, Madison (2012) urges, "As we recognize the vital importance of illuminating the researcher's positionality, we also understand that critical ethnography requires a deep and abiding dialogue with the Other. This means that our attention requires we remain grounded in the empirical world of the Other" (p. 8). Madison's critical ethnographic paradigm accounts for how researcher positionality informs representation of research subjects. He also argues, "Critical ethnography is a "meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among the Other(s)," in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward viable meanings of the social world of the phenomena (p. 9). My early encounter with this critical methodological approach was troubling because I felt discomfort with the dichotomy of researcher and other. This was the impetus for my critique of the critical ethnographic approach.

early in my research study to question "who" was producing what "truths," and "why" about the youth in my study. Given the power dynamics of a large urban school like the one I examined, it would have been far too risky[4] to question institutional racism and inequity as a novice researcher. Thus, instead of engaging in a productive methodological practice of taking such risks, I as a critical ethnographer was positioned in a binary system of reasoning and a "knowing" process about my participants. To acknowledge my positioning, I simultaneously critiqued my use of the critical paradigm and came to realize that I was engaging in what Patti Lather (2001) has argued is somewhat of a "rescue mission in search of the voiceless" (p. 200) without attention to identity politics, the romanticized voice of the voiceless, and representation. This "rescue mission" continues to perpetuate inferiority of research participants, particularly those that occupy minority or marginalized statuses in society, and fails to account for the power dynamics at play and the potential relational connections. The rescue mission also adheres to and upholds the normative production of knowledge.

To summarize in relation to my experience, I was embedded in a set of power relationships, and often forced to negotiate my own alignment with various stakeholders even though my allegiance was to the youth. I consistently had to negotiate my own identity as well as my positioning as a social scientist while simultaneously problematizing the very paradigm from which I situated myself. It is now, upon further reflection, I understand that I needed to engage in a more risky methodological practice during field research, and to re-think the usefulness of critical ethnographic paradigms. As such, I move on to how I argue we must disrupt critical methodologies and the ways in which I view risky, disruptive methodological practices through Deleuze's notion of event.

Disrupting Methodology

While the transition from conventional ethnography to a more critical one is well documented, fewer scholars have attempted to critique critical paradigms and move beyond them by mapping social processes in ethnography. Less attention has been given to ultimately questioning terms such as *critical* and researcher subjectivity[5] itself despite the contributions of feminist poststructuralists such as Jackson and Mazzei, Lather, and St. Pierre. To pursue research that resists universal truths of classical or traditional ethnography, moves beyond binary logic embedded in the critical ethnographic approaches, or the essentialist accounts of identity, a more nuanced philosophy-as-method approach is necessary. Mapping social processes through ethnography alongside poststructuralist theory can "see" divergent and potentially contradictory accounts of the "real." As such, Tamboukou and Ball (2003) argue that ethnography combined with assumptions of poststructuralist approaches to identity and power, subject-formation, and "truth-telling" are "disruptive," and they account for the power-knowledge relations that operate in local and specific

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4. To elaborate, the meaning of risk here relates to Kuntz's (2015) point about how the normative steps associated with what counts as research and meaning-making about data are not risky because they adhere to and uphold neoliberal, and in to some extent positivistic, norms and values (p. 99). My use of Deleuzian *event* is risky in the sense that it challenges assumptions on epistemological (by questioning knowing processes) and ontological (departing from notions of being and fixed identities to becoming(s)) levels, and on material levels by engaging in what I am arguing is a methodological death in order to allow for relational encounters in the research process.

5. In this article, I consider the killing off of the ethnographer, which is a new examination of researcher subjectivity. I say this so as not to confuse readers because much attention to researcher positionality and reflexivity certainly exists at exhaustive levels.

settings, enabling the researcher to "focus upon events [and] spaces which divide those in struggle" (p. 4).

The theme of "disrupting methodology" (MacLure, 2011; 2013; Masny, 2013) itself means researchers need to experiment with concepts to enable them to disrupt the systems of reason and logic that govern the social sciences and researcher/participant relations in the field. MacLure (2011) argues for a shift in qualitiative research to include "working in the ruins."[6] By this, she means that theorizing needs to be paired with a "return to the empirical" but a unique type of empiricism and what Deleuze (1994) calls "transcendental empiricism" (see also MacLure, 2011; Masny, 2013). MacLure (2011) explains, Deleuze's transcendental empiricism

> attends to sensations, forces, and movements beneath the skin, in matter, in cells, and in the gut, as well as between individauls and groups. This kind of empiricism traces intensities of affect that move and connect bodies, subatomically, biologically, physically, and culturally. (p. 999)

The bodily, material experiences are the "stuff" of ethnography. While it is challenging to often capture "matter" in ethnography, I argue that linking philosophy-as-method, or making our philosophical concepts mobile, allows for new encounters in research (MaClure, 2011).

Others have attempted to "disrupt methodology" through the notion of "encountering" (McCoy, 2012; Tamboukou & Ball, 2003) and by bringing Deleuze's work into the research process (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Grinberg, 2013; Mazzei, 2013). The limit of these few attempts to disrupt methodology through poststructuralism is that they remain at the theoretical level and often fail to enter into the research site and "get lost" (Lather, 2001, p. 200). This means, as I explain below, Deleuze's philosophy-as-method operates in the bodily, relational and spatial realm, which I argue is also the research site. A step in the right direction, McCoy (2012) draws from Deleuze's philosophy to consider how we might "trouble" or be troubled by research encounters (p. 763). I wish to build here on McCoy's theoretical argument for Deleuze's work and more broadly for the use of poststructuralist concepts as avenues toward "courting trouble" (McCoy, 2012, p. 763) and potentially "death" and the "breakdown of systems and selves" in the research process (Deleuze, 1994, p. 192).

Encounter with Deleuze's Event

As mentioned, I see an opportunity to bridge the theoretical, linguist domains of poststructuralism with the materialist, transcendental empiricism of a Deleuzian encounter with ethnography.[7] My attempt here is to "disrupt methodology," and move toward a methodology of death and the killing off of subjectivities for the researcher and the researched through the experimentation of Deleuze's event. Masny (2013) recently argued that Deleuze moves away from a subject that experiences the world, thinks about the world, and represents (p. 341). Instead, the subject emerges in events, and events are moments of "rupture, creation," and death (Masny, 2013, p. 341). In the

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6. This phrase of "working in the ruins," also refers to the ways in which feminist poststructuralists have engaged in research in spaces that have been shattered, leaving fragments. The "ruins" are at the "intersection of research, theory and politics" (Lather, 2001, p. 200).

7. I say "materialist" here mainly for conceptual clarity and to distinguish the material from other theoretical perspectives perspectives since Deleuze, as a material philosopher, considers the domain of philosophy to be the material. As such, this article engages with his materialist thinking—philosophy-as-method.

next sections, I attempt to walk the reader through this process of event—rupture, creation, and the death of the self. That said, I think it is necessary to re-frame the conversation around Deleuze's work and to consider Zourabichvilli, Lambert, and Aarons's (2012) comment that,

> to write on Deleuze is not to commemorate a philosophical revolution already made. Nobody knows nor claims to say what "the" philosophy of Deleuze is; we feel affected by Deleuze, we who are its explorers inasmuch as we try to do philosophy. (p. 41)

In this spirit and as part of the reflexive process of being a critical ethnographer, I begin with digging through Deleuze's work in hopes of a definition of event. Below, I offer how event may provide an analytical lens since I was "affected" by the "ruptures" and "death" of selves during my research.

Event as an Analytic

Deleuze's concept of event (1990; 1992; 1995) provides a useful optic for seeing Latino youth activism.[8] Event as a concept from Deleuze's relational space theory speaks to an "enlivened space—space as vital, material, immanent—that provides new space for living and new ways of being" (Doel & Clarke, 2011). Deleuze (1992) writes:

> An event does not just mean that "a man has been run over." The Great Pyramid is an event, and its duration for a period of one hour, thirty minutes, five minutes…a passage of Nature, of God, or a view of God. What are the conditions that make an event possible? Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under the condition that a sort of screen intervenes. (p. 86)

In this quote, Deleuze explains that an event is not a singular moment or thing that happens in a specific time or space; rather, he asks that we consider the "conditions" and social relations that make an event possible—the movement of bodies, relations, and material. The relations are particularly important in Deleuzian event because they reflect the spaces in which individuals mutually constitute themselves and the actions they take.

Moreover, in the context of a now disrupted methodological approach, the "chaos" reflects all of the potential connections across the field—a multiplicity.[9] The critical ethnographer brings

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8. This ethnographic study was conducted in Chicago between 2012-2014. I studied a community-school partnership in Chicago Public Schools, and observed Latino youth activists during the historic school closures during the 2012-2013 year. I completed more than 1100 hours of fieldwork, 40 youth interviews, and interviews with community organization staff and teachers at the low-income urban public school. The experiences I describe in this section are also part of another publication (Rodriguez, forthcoming), but because I am focusing on the theoretical and methodological dimensions and questions in this paper, I am not detailing the traditional social science format of study design, site selection, sampling, etc. since that would be the antithesis of Deleuzian encounter (see, Rodriguez, 2015b for study design).

9. The notion of event connects to Deleuze's larger philosophical project and perspective on how human thought can and ought to escape the constraints of language, institutions, social practices or any other thing that stifle an individual's ability to be creative and liberated (see for example, Deleuze & Parnet, 1987 and Deleuze & Guatarri, 1994). As such, a multiplicity—where events occur within—is a concept that provides a window into his view of the social world and relations among and across individuals. From the events of a material world, the self creates meaning more productively. Deleuze's productive world inculcates ideas and practices in a productive space by embracing a realm of possibility. It is this realm of "possibles," that marks and broadens issues of ontology to include a space

into view particular events as the intervener while questioning which "truths" are critical to tell as part of the process of research. This is not to say, that she is on the inside or outside position of the research site, and that she extracts meaning as it emerges. Rather, the critical ethnographer, in Deleuzian event, is also part of event(s) and mutually constituted as part of the pure chaos of event. As such she stands on unstable, non-knowable, ground that is no longer rooted in the normative (social science) means of knowledge production. This is an imperative move toward a different kind of "intervening," one in which the inquirer is not only situated in the chaos of event but equally contingent and susceptible to risk. Below, I describe this risk—or what I am calling a methodological death—and I describe the *process* of youth activism and identity formation along with my role as ethnographer to demonstrate how youth make up the "material," of the "enlivened space" and how that which constitutes event is a series of conditions, experiences, and desires.

Deleuze's notion of event revealed youth identity formation as a process of killing off identities, generating self-created identities, and then restructuring social space and also reconfiguring the materiality of space. First, Deleuze's event is a complex, non-linear process as opposed to a singular, linear moment in time. Deleuze (1995) explains,

> underneath the large noisy events lie the small events of silence. I've tried in all of my books to discover the nature of events: it's a philosophical concept, the only one capable of ousting the verb 'to be' and its attributes. (p. 141)

Here Deleuze signals that concepts like event are a process or a *becoming* rather than *being*. Further, Humphrey (2008) argues,

> event is a creative switch. It can be considered itself as a-temporal; it can be an instance or more likely drawn out over a sequence of happenings; in either case, it breaks apart earlier bodies of knowledge by forcing them to be seen in a particular light. (p. 375)

Events are the ways that life, desires, and bodies enliven a space or give space its materiality. Building upon sense making of event, Patton (1997) explains, "the knife opening up a wound in flesh is an attribute of interpenetration of bodies, but the event of 'being cut' is what is expressed by the statement." Here, Patton (1997) refers to the sensations that the body endures as part of event rather than just the language of "being cut." This cut, or what I refer to later as a death, signals a break from the normative work of methodology for me and a break of the system of reasoning that categorize and position youth in unproductive ways. Similarly Barad (2003) refers to this as an "agential cut" as a "local" moment in which a "material configuration" occurs, suggesting a space where desires, bodies, things interact to produce something, relationally. In addition, meaning is made through a re-configured set of social relations where no distinctions between the observer and the observed exist, only the relations that emerge as part of the research site (Barad, 2003). This is important, then, for theorizing event as part of the disruptive methodological practice because it raises implications for doing critical work in newly productive ways.

Next, I offer the narrative of event, a small piece of the larger two-year project, in a Deleuzian sense to recount the experiences of youth in the study, which also means to "begin in the middle" (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987) and to collapse time and space in the narrative. By this, I offer here an opportunity for the reader to enter into the process that I write about and to live within our

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where multiple ideas and practices operate. This realm considers the socio-political events of the world as useful for understanding our existence.

experiences as part of this disrupted methodology—the "chaotic multiplicity." This section allows readers to envision: a) the material bodies and affective desires for social change of youth through narrative description; b) the memory of the 'event' through the eyes of the "analyst" and her lived experience and documentation through field notes, where I echo Bruno Latour's (2005) notion of the "analyst" as one who reassembles subjects in anthropological narratives (see also Humphrey, 2008); c) the folding, non-linearity, of time across the event. Finally, the reader should envision youth who are labeled as "failures" undergo a Deleuzian process of the death of the self. As I conducted and analyzed the ethnographic research, I found that youth literally had to kill off parts of themselves to become something other than the institutionally ascribed identities placed upon them and perpetuated through deficit discourses.

"The Die-In," and Event as the Death of the Self

In the spring of 2013 after being ignored by the Board of Education, the next steps were set in motion for youth activists. They wanted to plan a demonstration—an act of civil disobedience—to continue to disrupt the oppression of the school closure policy occurring in low-income communities of color. Over and over, youth told me when they understood how unfair school policies were in their city, it felt like "bursting a bubble" for them. They felt compelled to organize against the school closure policy and engaged in what several youth called a "movement" even though their school had perceived them as "just regulars." In the school system, "regulars" meant the students were not honors, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate students. For instance, a teacher referred to the "regulars" as "a bunch of low-income kids at a ghetto school on the South Side of Chicago." By this she meant, it would be hard to envision that these youth would reach educational attainment or advancement in society beyond even high school given where they come from. Despite having experienced institutional identities that were informed through deficit discourses of failure and being lower-tracked students, the youth engaged in activism. This was unique because of the high levels of strategizing and critically thinking that took place throughout the year by the youth in my research. These were not skills that the school and other education policy makers perceived to be a part of the repertoire of youth from low-income, "at risk," failing schools.

Youth met across the city and in coffee shops after school to plan what would be called the "die-in." The "die-in" would allow them to lie down in an intersection on the South Side of Chicago. The purpose of lying down in the intersection was to show the possible casualties that could result from school closures. To explain, the youth selected an intersection that also signaled a "gang territory line." Marley (pseudonym) said:

> We chose that intersection because that is a dividing line for gang territories. We said that if they close these schools, then children would have to cross a street to go to their new "receiving school" that would put their lives in jeopardy.

Penny (pseudonym) added:

> We performed our act of civil disobedience in which we laid down in the streets with white t-shirts with mock blood on the shirts to represent the possible casualties that could result from the careless policy of the Board of Education and the Mayor. (Field Notes, April 30, 2013)

Marley and Penny were the activists on the scene.[10] They were arrested, as they had been prepared for with the help of teachers from O'Donnell (pseudonym) and youth organizers with the community organization, and were taken to a jail on the south side of the city near their high school. They were held at the jail that night. After the "die-in" and the stint in jail, Marley and Penny reflected on the experience with me the next day outside of O'Donnell:

> Penny said, "We lay down silently during a red light. We were silent but I started chanting when I was arrested." Marley said, "We were protesting, and then a press conference started. And it was all just happening. Penny grabbed the microphone and said, "All my great teachers taught me that if you believe in something, you can make change." The cops told them to get up out of the intersection or they were going to get arrested. "People were chanting. Cars were also beeping at us and were slowing down. It was all just happening around us. We did stop traffic. We didn't get up, so they put handcuffs on us. It was sorta sharp and tight on my wrists." He continued, "The cops said we were obstructing traffic and it was criminal negligence. We were taken to the police station. I was held there until 1:30 a.m., but Penny got out earlier around 10:30 p.m." He remembered that it was warm that day and he felt the concrete, hot against the thin white t-shirts they had made. (Field Notes, May 21, 2013)

Further, Marley commented:

> We did something right. We got arrested because we want to get our point across. The system is set up to keep us down, like CPS (Chicago Public Schools) doesn't acknowledge this civil disobedience or our previous walkouts and protests. The group of us that were

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10. The youth activists took this image. These images were posted to the youth activist twitter account that was formed so they could circulate the actions widely to the public.

arrested were held together before questioning. The room they had for us wasn't big enough so they split us up into groups of two. There was this officer processing our information. She said she agreed with us, like she agreed with what we were doing, but she said she couldn't protest with us or stand up with us because she is a cop. She was on our side. That made me feel good. People know that the Board of Education are putting forth racist policies that hurt kids. From where we were on the ground, you could see one of the windows of the school. It had kids cheering and then the blinds came down. Like they didn't want the little elementary school kids to see us or cheer for us from the school. (Field Notes, May 21, 2013)

Penny said: "They called us, 'the revolutionaries,' at school when we were walking down the hall today" (Field Notes, May 21, 2013). Amelia said: "We do activist things even though we're 'nothing'" (Field notes, May 21, 2013).

Discussion

A phrase that all the youth in this study repeated to me was, "It's a movement." This phrase reflected the literal movement across spaces, as in the walkout/protest, marches to CPS headquarters and board meetings, the die-in, and the protest and vigil on the day the board voted to close a historic number of schools. The "movement" also reflected the desires that were conjured for youth as they participated in activism, not viewing each move as a singular act but instead viewing their movement of ideas across time and space. Such "movement" also signals the larger process that youth were engaging in—the becoming something other than the fixed labels that were assigned to them through institutional labels. Striving to recognize the spaces in which youth constituted themselves in relation to the death of previous labels/identities is part of what I try to capture above by privileging youth voice and description of the experience—constantly asking who were the youth in these moments. This section discusses the ways that Deleuzian event connects to the death of the self, and then I discuss the notion of desires that emerged through the lens of event.

Event as a "Movement" and the Death of the Self

Deleuzian event enables us to witness and experience social identity formation through "ruptures," and "incomplete, always-in-process" tellings of youth desire and actions (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, p. 750). Through the lens of event and alongside this data, we see youth engaging in a process of what Deleuze calls self-actualization—or as the youth stated, "bursting a bubble"—from their social reality to the realization that educational inequality existed. Youth recognized themselves as poor, "just regulars," in their school and even as "nothing" as Amelia stated to me. They recognized themselves as marginalized in particular spaces such as their low-income communities and "failing schools." Their voices were unheard and their bodies often rendered invisible in educational policy matters. Further, they were not allowed to speak in white spaces such as those of the Board of Education meeting. With each activist activity, youth generated ideas, new desires, and new acts to perform in their fight for justice. In this Deleuzian event, they faced new parts of themselves as social space was mapped by youth experience.

To elaborate, moments of self-actualization are critical in Deleuzian event because they offer a rupture, and a potential avenue to experience death(s) of particular subjectivities. In moments of self-actualization, Deleuze (1990) posits that subjects constitute themselves in relation to

the social space and the mingling of bodies, desires, and affinities across space. In a sense, the youth experienced this in the "die-in" when they performed the "die-in" and refused to speak, move, or be. While difficult to capture the meaning and truth telling around the event as the media cameras were filming, youth refused to speak, and thus they complicated the space as a space of death of themselves. The deaths were symbolic of their prior selves as "just regulars" and "nothings" on route to becoming "activists." The tension exists is a productive one as youth shed, or kill off the former self of *being* nothing to *becoming* something.

Further, the "die-in" was a performative act in which they laid down in the intersection to represent possible deaths that would be an effect of school closure policy. The youth also engaged in a symbolic death against themselves as another self was constituted in the *process of becoming*, saying, "we're not just regular. We're activists." They shed a self that was associated with the schools they attend in the communities in which they live to *become* the activist. Connecting to event with the moments from the data, Deleuze (1990) argues:

> Every event is like a death. With every event, there is indeed the present moment of its actualization [youth's bubble bursts, the realization that the school board's policies are "racist"], the moment in which the event is embodied in a state of affairs, which we designate as "here, the moment has come" [Walkout, April 24, 2013, Die-in, May 15, 2013, Protests, May 22-25, 2013 as examples of such designation]. But, that which happens before and after is also wrapped up in this event—the movement that is "free of limitations." (p. 151)

The "movement," as youth put it, included moments free of limitations and self-actualization; moments such the "die-in" are made into a "state of affairs" because we call it a signifying moment in the youth experience. But, in Deleuze's event, that which came before, in between, and after also are relevant. The youth experience of developing an awareness of the ways in which they were marginalized in their schools and in their communities is wrapped up in event. Despite the arrests, the policing of school administration to suppress any momentum around youth activism, and being silenced by the Board of Education, the youth were still able to develop a sense of social justice and a model for change beyond the moments designated here as having importance. For example, they said:

> *Marley*: I mean I feel like I have learned and developed my view of social justice these last months. I feel like school is a place I at least began to learn and think about these issues, so education became connected to social justice for me but it moved beyond the classroom. What CPS is doing is not justice.
> *Penny:* When we were put in the police car, it was exciting and we had a moment of feeling scared. We're not nothing. We made these acts and changed what that intersection meant.
> *Marley:* Even if the Board votes to close the 50 schools doesn't mean our fight will end. This is a movement.
> *Penny:* As long as there is humanity, there will be people to fight. It's a movement. (Field Notes, May 21, 2013)

Each youth experienced themselves through the social processes—the movement of event. The process of experiencing self occurs in spaces that function to "erase" them as "regulars." Such a

moment, for instance, was when they participated in the "die-in" demonstration, and as Penny noted above, the youth changed what that space of the intersection meant to people by "enlivening the space" with the materiality and vitality of their bodies and desires for social change (Doel & Clarke, 2011; Webb & Gulson, 2013). Youth claimed the street intersection and made it mean something on their terms to demonstrate to the community, the city, and the Board of Education that their policies have consequences. Further, Deleuze (1990) argues:

> An event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed. It signals and awaits us. It must be understood, willed, and represented in that which occurs…to will and release the event, to become the offspring of one's own events, and thereby, to have one more birth, and to break with one's carnal birth—to become the offspring of one's events and not of one's actions effectively liberates us from the limits of individuals and persons. (p. 150)

This quote speaks to how the use of event allows the critical ethnographer as well as the youth in this case to emerge from within the process—pure event—rather from external forces or through extracted meanings. In the space of event (the research site, the intersection, marches, or protests), youth emerge in relation to former selves as they become new selves. Youth activists became the "offspring" and break from institutional labels of "failure" or "at risk" to push the boundaries of what is made possible as they changed the meaning of the space during the "die-in."

In the Moving is Death and Becoming

Additionally, the "die-in" was a symbolic act of violence and "erasure subjectivity in the sites of their marginality" (Kaplan, 1996, p. 86). This means, that while youth were demonstrating to fight the school board's closure policy, there existed deeper meaning beyond the activity. Youth, deemed 'regulars' and failures by the Board of Education, engaged in a symbolic act of violence. After several protests at the Board of Education, youth remained steadfast despite a lack of acknowledgment of their actions by the board. One youth, Amelia, said, "I do activist things even though I'm nothing. The board and even some teachers here think we are nothing. But what? We can't be activists?" In the moments of planning activist activities and engaging in the die-in, youth killed off the "regular" self to *become* an activist and to ultimately re-shape their identities in new ways that were meaningful to them. Deleuze's notion of event helps to re-conceptualize the methodological practice and site as event. We not only disrupt normative work with this newly productive methodological practice but we can also encounter new opportunities for death and becoming, and opportunities to re-configure the critical "truths" as they are purely emerging in event. Simultaneously, as youth let go of ontological positions ascribed to them through labels such as "nothing" or "just regulars" to engage in productive deaths of the self, I as the critical ethnographer let go of normative social science practices, and I problematized my own methodological practices in order to orient myself in the social justice-oriented research space. In other words, I experienced a death of a particular way of being a researcher in the world toward becoming someone from within the youth-space of event.

Furthermore, the data reveals instances of youth identity formation as a process of committing violence against oneself across racialized spaces. In other words, youth—who are already marginalized through institutional structures and neoliberal accountability mechanisms in public

education—find ways to invent new versions of themselves across spaces of power. Deleuze (1995) argues:

> Once one steps outside what's been thought before, once one ventures outside what's familiar and reassuring, once one has to invent new concepts for unknown lands, then methods and moral systems break down and thinking becomes, as Foucault puts it, a "perilous act," a violence, whose first victim is oneself. (p. 103)

Examples of youth venturing beyond what they know and generating activist activities reveal that they engage in this "perilous act" to kill off former selves that were limiting their opportunity to grow and transform. For instance, moving from the space of their school to the streets and marching downtown to Chicago Public Schools headquarters are examples of youth attempting to shape spaces that exclude them or spaces that are racially marked through deficit discourses.

The expanding notions of self and experience reflect the movement, transformation, liberation, and death of youth selves in Deleuzian event. Further, Deleuzian event (as a space and subject) is a process in which a subject comes into relation with oneself in a particular space, moving toward liberation (Deleuze, 1992; Humphrey, 2008). The moments from the data capture how youth "tear" up themselves, but also propel themselves into unknown worlds of social problems (Deleuze, 1994). In Deleuzian event, "states of affairs" such as a protest, a march, or an act of civil disobedience, reveal sensation and desire of youth for a more socially just educational policy and experience (Coldwell, 1997). Using Deleuze's notion of event, accounting for desire, movement, and liberation, we can begin to break the social spaces and theorize alternative forms of identity and the production of space on the terms of often unheard and marginalized groups. It is the desire for knowledge—for "more"—that sustains them. Penny claimed, "I just came to realize how valuable youth are when it comes to injustice" (Interview, June 3, 2013). It is the unsteady and uncertain desires these youth experience that enables them to experiment socially, culturally, and politically with their social identities and to produce youth cultural organizing; "It's a movement."

Significance: Toward a Methodology of Death

This article offers a new method of contingency by drawing on philosophical concepts such as Deleuze's notion of event and bringing them into the research process. If in critical work we are to break down normative systems of reason that govern action and possible selves for youth, then it begins with breaking out of traditional paradigms and problematizing the very use of the work critical as part of the research practice. The implications of using nuanced concepts such as event and performing them in the analytic process were intended to push our thinking about critical methodology. The act of disrupting normative discourses through methodological interventions is significant for theorizing ethnographic data through poststructuralist lenses.

Moreover, in this ethnographic study, I saw the circulation of youth desire and the movement and travel of their ideas across the social spaces we traversed. I captured moments when youth "tear" up themselves, but also propel themselves into unknown worlds of social problems (Deleuze, 1994). I witnessed symbolic deaths as part of the social relations in the research field. The process of identity formation (for participants and researchers alike) involves many deaths as Deleuze (1990) says in *The Logic of Sense*. Death (symbolic) of selves is part of the process of effecting change. Youth—marginalized by neighborhood segregation, unequal school funding sys-

tems, and their academic positioning of "regular"—kill of the selves that are tied to such marginalization, and their desires for change and activism reflect the "methods and moral systems" that break down as the youth commit "perilous acts" in an attempt to liberate themselves.

The challenge for me an ethnographer was the "So what?" and the pending critique of what this work means. Part of the journey has led me to reconsider these important questions and to entertain the idea that indeed perhaps the researcher needs to undergo a death. This means, the stories and voices are not always easily represented, categorized, interpreted, or classified in neat packages. Perhaps, the social science ethnographer needs to die in the process of the messy human entanglements since thinking with Deleuze considers these acts of data analysis and representation to be "second order operations performed on the flux and movement of the world. They make things stand still and separate out, so that meaning, structure, and order may coalesce" (MacLure, 2013, p. 228).

Moreover, Deleuzian event enables new productive entanglements as part of one's methodological practice. For instance, to disrupt normative social science paradigms, I had to disrupt my own critical ethnographic practice by problematizing the very paradigm I was working within. These moments of what I am calling a methodology of death were troubling, intimate, risky, and productive. I was able to become part of a larger set of social relations in relation to the social justice work of the youth as well as part of the research. In these productive spaces researchers can re-create themselves. As such, Deleuze (1997) argues a relevant point for bringing philosophical perspectives into the research process, he says, "People necessarily enter into conditions of becoming [and] invent themselves in new conditions of struggle, and the task of [researchers] is to contribute to the invention of this unborn people who do not yet have a language" (p. xlii). By disrupting our own practices even as we engage in them regardless of the risks, we make way for new possibilities and for opportunities to tell new truths, which perhaps include those that would otherwise remain hidden or marginalized.

Finally, Deleuze (1990; 1994) helps us understand that education for youth includes moments of contradiction, movement, and shifts in identities. This is particularly important for educational research on marginalized youth in low-income urban communities as they navigate power structures and move toward liberation. We as critical researchers must transform dualistic and essentialism paradigms that often govern social science research.

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Turning the Lens: Reflexivity in Research & Teaching with Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract:

This article explores the use of Critical Discourse Analysis in truth-telling in education research. I argue that without critical reflexivity Critical Discourse Analysis can become a means of reinforcing and reinscribing some of the same dominant discourses that we critique. Here I suggest the recognition that in the role of teacher and researcher we are also caught up in dominant discourses. As such we need to include our own discourse use (both teaching and writing) in our analysis and critique. In doing so we can more effectively use CDA for truth-telling. To illustrate I present two sample analyses from a social justice oriented action research course for secondary preservice mathematics teachers. I include my own use of discourse in the analysis both as the teacher of the course and then critique my written analysis of the same class.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, researcher reflexivity, dominant discourse*

Critical Discourse Analysis

In broad terms CDA attempts to explain the ways that language is linked to society, with a clear political stance growing out of critical theory (Chilton, 2011). The work of Fairclough (2001) draws on Foucault to explore the ways in which consent is manufactured through dominant discourses (Fairclough uses the term "ideology"). Fairclough (2001) describes his work as using discourse to explain the relationship between social norms and power. In this article I draw from a larger study to show how the work of Walshaw (2013) and Thompson (2003) led to greater reflexivity on my teaching and research (specifics are explained later).

Discourse includes particular ways of speaking and all the things that accompany speech to make the spoken word and the speaker understandable (Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 2005). These things include appearance, tools, context of interaction, and the norms of interaction (Gee, 2005). Through discourses we create the objects, identities, etc. of which we speak. While discourses do not create the physical being of a mathematics teacher, they define what we understand as *mathematics teacher*, *mathematics student*, and *mathematics,* etc., thereby creating and recreating terms in categories as we use them and shaping the physical manifestations of these terms.

As a result, Fairclough (2001) explains, the need to use discourses in a recognizable way forms a set of constraints that both restricts what is possible and enables action and interaction. Discourses enable in that using the appropriate discourses allows me to be recognized as a mathematics teacher. However, these same discourses constrain by setting limits as to what speech, behavior, dress, actions, etc. are acceptable for a mathematics teacher. This simultaneous enablement

and constraint illustrate the operation of power through discourses. The use of discourses then becomes a continual negotiation of these power relations. In the mathematics classroom this negotiation occurs most directly between the teacher and students, but the negotiation also includes other members of the school community and society. These negotiations are implicit and dependent on a shared idea of what it means to be a "teacher" or "student." When one of these discourses becomes dominant it then excludes other ways of thinking and speaking by establishing an apparently static, common sense, and universal understanding of truth. They cast alternative discourses as either untrue, partially true, or unimaginable. By analyzing these discourses CDA can become a means to promote truths which have been disallowed by dominant discourses.

It may be helpful to view ourselves as immersed in a sea of discourses through our continuous interactions with people, media, and institutions (see Figure 1).
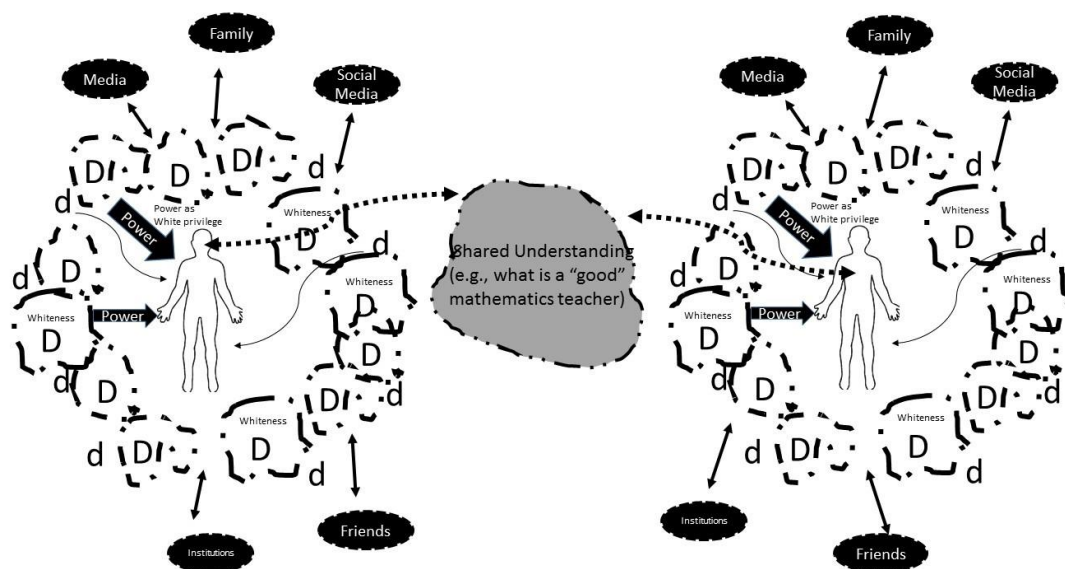
Some of them are dominant (capital "D")[1] others are not dominant (lowercase "d"; Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 2005). Many of these dominant discourses are discourses of Whiteness since they maintain White privilege. The dominant discourses are connected via large block arrows (imagine varying sizes of arrows connecting discourses to the person) to show how through their ubiquity and consistent repetition we have much greater access to them. These discourses carry power. In contrast, the connections between us and the non-dominant discourses are thinner and more tenuous. When we interact with someone we each draw on the discourses that we have access to and put them together to re-create in that moment our shared understanding of our topic of discussion (e.g., what it means to be a "good" mathematics teacher). To be able to discuss it meaningfully we need to have some shared discourses in order to understand one another (enabled; Gee, 2005), but this also means that we are limited (constrained) in our ability to imagine our topic in a way that differs from what is provided to us in the discourses that we know and have been exposed to.

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1. This should not be confused with Gee's (2005) distinction between Discourse/discourse. Here I am focusing on the status (dominance) of different discourses rather than the extra-linguistic features that are part of Gee's conceptualization of Discourse.

The pressure felt to conform to these discourses as well as the ways that the discourses place limits on what is possible to think and speak (and still be recognized as a mathematics teacher) maintain power structures. In the United States (and elsewhere) the dominant discourses are used to maintain and promote White power and privilege. Whiteness Theory operates on the assumption that the lives of all people in the U.S., in particular (but elsewhere as well), are discourses of Whiteness (Yoon, 2012). Whiteness Theory helps to uncover the ways in which lives are racially structured, including the lives of White people (Frankenberg, 1993; Frye, 1992). Since historical mathematical achievement plays out on clearly racial lines in U.S. K-12 schools (Stinson, 2004), I operate from the assumption that race is a significant factor in defining mathematical success as traditionally measured within school mathematics.

Problems with Critical Discourse Analysis in Education

Within education research CDA has typically been applied to understand students' use of discourses (Rogers et al, 2005), leaving teachers and teacher-student interactions out. Without including these teacher-student interactions a key aspect of what discourses are used and how they are taken up is left out. Further Rogers et al (2005) note that CDA in education often does not address the role of the researcher and how the researcher is also using and reinforcing particular discourses.

Not only do these practices miss the social justice potential of CDA to reveal and highlight the circulation of power through discourse in the classroom. These practices also ignore the ways in which dominant discourses shape the analyses and interpretation of the critical discourse analyst; thereby lessening the truth-telling potential of CDA. Finally, CDA as applied in education research often does not pay sufficient attention to race, even though most studies analyze the discourse of historically marginalized groups (Rogers et al., 2005). Another clear problem in adopting this approach is that the theoretical and methodological foundations I am drawing on are dominated by White researchers (Rogers, 2011). I summarize these problems as the teacher/researcher's use of discourse, lack of attention to race, and the dominance of Whiteness in CDA.

In my case these problems overlap since as a White researcher, drawing on a theory and method developed (primarily) by White researchers, it is easy to overlook the influence these discourses have on my research and teaching and to overlook how I reinforce these discourses in my teaching and research. The risk here is that CDA then becomes a means to obscure, rather than reveal, truth. Rogers et al (2005) call for greater researcher reflexivity when CDA is practiced in education. In their explanation of reflexivity they suggest that one key is that the researcher turn the analytical lens back on her- or him-self. Thus in my work (as a mathematics educator and mathematics teacher educator) with preservice mathematics teachers I need to include in my analysis the particular approaches to mathematics education I promote and their potential to maintain dominant discourses. As a result, to address reflexivity I draw on two key concepts from the work of Walshaw (2013) in mathematics education and Thompson (2003) in Whiteness Theory.

First, Walshaw (2013) draws on Foucault to understand the ways in which power affects identity development for mathematics teachers and students. In doing so she notes that, "in the classroom strands of power entangle everyone, governing, regulating, and disciplining teachers as well as students" (p. 103). As a result teachers (as well as researchers) regularly draw on the same dominant discourses that their students use. Focusing only on students means that researchers miss an important way in which dominant discourses are used, reinforced, critiqued, or disrupted in the

classroom, especially considering the traditionally authoritative role that teachers (especially mathematics teachers) take.

Second, Thompson (2003) explains that White, anti-racist educators may, through our efforts to promote and teach anti-racism, particularly to White students, set ourselves up as performing the "right" kind of anti-racism. The focus becomes proving our own "goodness" as Whites where we gain merit by pointing out the racism of other Whites; the more nuanced our critique the more we bolster our anti-racist credentials. As Applebaum (2010) explains this kind of "goodness" becomes problematic as we refuse to hear those who might critique our efforts; we especially fail to meaningfully engage with scholars and/or students of color. Whiteness is thereby reinforced as we critique Whiteness or racism in the discourse of others, while deflecting attention (including our own) from the Whiteness in our discourse. In the following sections I explain the methods I used, how I incorporate the work of Walshaw (2013) and Thompson (2003) to promote greater reflexivity on my part, and provide two sample analyses to illustrate this work.

Social Justice Mathematics Education

Multiple authors note the lack of consistent definitions of social justice in education (Grant & Agosto, 2008; North, 2008). However, North's (2008) review lays out three tensions of social justice. These tensions are between redistribution and recognition, macro- and micro-issues, and knowledge and action. North (2008) suggests that social justice balance the priorities of the redistribution of material resources with the recognition of group and individual differences. Macro-level issues include broad national and global inequities and the policies that promote these inequities, while micro-level include the day-to-day happenings of a particular classroom and the needs of the students and teacher (both in and out of school). The final tension suggests a need to balance learning about inequity (knowledge) and taking action.

Within mathematics education the theorizing of social justice has drawn heavily from Freirian critical pedagogy (Frankenstein, 1990; Gustein, 2006). From this perspective social justice mathematics often involves curricular changes to use mathematics for social critique (Gutiérrez, 2016). The dominance of this perspective has, perhaps, contributed to the limited adoption of social justice mathematics. Additionally, it appears to give priority to aspects of (rather than maintaining balance between) the various tensions of social justice in education (North, 2008). In order to expand this understanding of social justice mathematics I turn to Gutiérrez (2012).

Gutiérrez (2012) describes four dimensions of equity. These are access, achievement, identity, and power. Access deals with the resources that students have available to them, including technology and high-quality instruction. Achievement is measured in the traditional sense of grades and test scores. Both access and achievement generally leave the mathematics content untouched. However, these two are necessary in order to provide students with the material resources and social capital to advance in the school system. Attending to identity means providing opportunities for students to draw on their own linguistic and cultural resources, becoming better by their own standards, and coming to understand themselves and their world in relation to mathematics. Addressing power includes addressing whose voice matters in the classroom, using mathematics for social critique, and questioning the nature of mathematics and mathematical ways of knowing (Gutiérrez, 2012).

Methods

Participants

I grew up immersed in and accepting of dominant discourses, especially discourses of Whiteness. I did not consider myself privileged and believed many of the myths of Whiteness, including meritocracy. I thought of racism as a problem of the past and had minimal interactions with people of color. Learning to speak Spanish and living for two-years as a missionary in southern Chile began to open my thinking to different perspectives on the world, including manifestations of racism and discrimination. When I returned to the United States and re-enrolled in college it was with a goal of becoming a teacher. On completing a bachelor's degree in mathematics education and Spanish teaching as well as a master's degree in teaching English as a second language, I took my first teaching job at a rural high school in Colorado. The high school had a student population of about 750 with 50% Latino students, mostly from Mexico and Central America.

As a first year teacher I taught all of the sheltered mathematics classes and continued teaching every sheltered mathematics class that was offered for four years. My teaching experience was very positive and the relationships that I developed with my students continue. However, I was also aware that my teaching was not as student-centered nor as relevant to my students as I wanted it to be. What I found frustrating was the difficulty of trying to teach in student-centered and relevant ways that were so different from the traditional way I had been taught. In addition, I felt like I could not see beyond the abstract, dominant mathematics in order to understand how to make the connections to students' lives that I felt were necessary. I witnessed first-hand the roles of race and class in the lives of students in our education system. There was a superficial harmony at the school between the wealthy White students and the working-class Latino students. However, there were clear divisions along race and class lines that determined which entrance to the school students used, what classes they took, which sports they participated in and supported, what cars they drove (or didn't drive), even where they parked their cars, and where and if they went to college. As an example, the school implemented a policy which assigned parking stalls to students, but students had to present a driver's license, proof of insurance, and pay a fee. Since many Latino students either did not have a license or could not afford the fee they had to park in a mud parking lot across the street.

Mathematics classes were one of the key ways to maintain these divisions. Once these divisions were made (mostly in middle school) they were set. A student who began high school taking Algebra 1 would not make it to AP Calculus as a senior. As a new teacher I felt pressure to support school policies in order to maintain my position as a teacher; I also wanted to better serve my students who were not being served by those same school policies. I wanted to teach mathematics in innovative and at times critical ways, but I felt the need to conform to traditional views of teaching mathematics, emphasizing correct answers and focused on "covering curriculum." Perhaps more importantly I saw that the school was not meeting the needs of my students in a number of ways. The students were clearly divided into tracks by race. School activities were dominated by the wealthy White students and there was a clear sense that the school catered to the White students. These experiences contrasted for me the privileged educational experiences that I had with those of my Latino students. In the face of these experiences my acceptance of the dominant discourses about race and education began to weaken, leading me to pursue a PhD with a critical focus and to emphasize social justice in my work with teacher candidates in the present study.

Student Teachers

The participants in this study were all working towards a Master's degree in mathematics with teaching certification. These students were funded by Mathematics for America (MfA). MfA recruited students with Bachelor's degrees in mathematics fields, funded their education, and paired them with accomplished mathematics teachers for their student-teaching (Mathematics for America, 2013). This was a nontraditional program leading to teacher certification by following a condensed version of the standard teacher education curriculum. During the Fall 2013 academic semester I supervised these teacher candidates during their early months of student-teaching. I also attended monthly MfA meetings and an MfA retreat with them. During the Spring 2014 semester I taught an action research class as I continued supervision of their student-teaching. In our various interactions several of the preservice teachers expressed an interest in learning to teach for social justice and four attended a practitioner conference on teaching mathematics for social justice in Los Angeles, CA. I consider each of these teachers to be capable and committed educators, who sincerely struggle with what it means and how to teach mathematics for social justice. While all seven teacher candidates participated in the larger study I only include biographical information on those teacher candidates who are represented in the sample analyses.

Lisa

Lisa provided very little demographic information. She was 26 at the time she took my class and is a White woman. She excelled at mathematics early on and enjoyed the status that she gained from being good at and helping her classmates with mathematics in high school. She delayed taking mathematics classes in high school, but after finishing her general education requirements she determined to major in mathematics. Lisa described her college mathematics experience as very different from her early experience. She struggled in these classes and often did not dare to ask questions or talk to her professors in fear that they would discover her lack of mathematics ability. Eventually she successfully completed her degree. After working in restaurants for a year she returned to college to pursue a mathematics teaching master's degree and had a much better experience. In describing her desire to become a teacher Lisa gushed about the opportunity to work with young people and to influence them at this key part of their lives. She particularly chose mathematics because of its perceived difficulty for these students. As she finished my class she expressed a clear view that all teaching is political in its effects on students and society.

In her student-teaching placement Lisa worked in a mathematics- and science- focused charter high-school. Lisa's classes were small and racially and socio-economically diverse. She worked with a very competent mentor who regularly used inquiry-based teaching methods and focused on traditional content. Lisa's mentor supported her social justice efforts even though she did not necessarily agree with them or have the ability to provide practical guidance. Lisa adopted many of the methods that her mentor teacher used, although Lisa placed much greater emphasis on developing relationships with and understanding her students' perspectives.

Stella

Stella, at the time of my class, was a 22-year-old White woman. She grew up in an affluent neighborhood in the same city as our university and eventually took a job in the same high school that she had attended as a student. She excelled at mathematics in middle and high school. She

determined to become a mathematics teacher, because mathematics was her favorite subject and she enjoyed working with kids. Stella talked about being a teacher who can guide students both in gaining deep understanding of and ownership of mathematics and in their life choices.

Stella student-taught in the same school as Lisa, although she worked primarily with freshmen (Lisa worked with juniors). Stella worked with a competent and experienced mentor teacher who followed her reform-based textbook very closely. Stella also followed the textbook closely, although she began developing more of her own materials later in the semester. Stella excelled at finding ways to engage her students in meaningful and in-depth mathematical discussions.

Jeff

Jeff, at 48, was the oldest of the group. He was from a neighboring state, but had lived in our state for much of his adult life. He had prior degrees in psychology and physics and had worked for a number of years in business before returning to college to become a teacher. Jeff did very well in his mathematics classes and was comfortable with the traditional style (lecture, decontextualized problem sets, emphasis on procedural accuracy, and emphasis on correct answers) of teaching those classes. However, his experiences with his own children in mathematics classes and observing classmates led him to believe that traditional methods were not the most effective for many students, and this is part of what led him to be a mathematics teacher.

Jeff completed his student-teaching at a large public high school. His mentor teacher was experienced, but was also adapting to her 1st year at a new school. This, coupled with a number of personal life issues that she faced and with a lack of Common Core aligned curricular materials for her grade level, meant that Jeff did not get the support he felt he needed. Most of her time was spent developing curriculum and there was little time for collaboration. Jeff was also commuting from over an hour away. As a result he was very concerned about what he considered the basics of being a mathematics teacher, which included developing mathematically focused lessons that were accessible to students, and classroom management. While he expressed appreciation for social justice issues, he also suggested that these would best be taken up later in his teaching. Table 1 summarizes participant information.

Table 1. Summary of participant characteristics

Chosen Pseudonym	Self-selected Race	Gender	Age	Background Information	Student-Teaching Context
None (Lisa)	None (White)	Female	26	From state of study; previously worked in schools in a nonteaching capacity	Taught in a diverse mathematics/science focused charter high school. Mentor teacher regularly used reform methods and was very supportive.
Stella	None (White)	Female	22	From city of study; religious	Taught in a diverse mathematics/science focused charter high school. Mentor teacher regularly used reform methods (strictly following a reform textbook) and was very supportive.

None (Jeff)	None (White)	Male	48	From Wyoming; has worked previously in business, physics, and psychology	Taught in a large public high school. Due to various circumstances Jeff did not feel he got all the support he needed from his mentor and school. Teaching was mostly traditional.
Teacher	White	Male	34	From state of study; speaks Spanish as a second language, member of dominant local religion	Taught (prior to study) in a diverse public high school. Worked primarily with recent immigrant Latino students.

The course I taught these teacher candidates was one of the final requirements for their certification as teachers. As a group these students were committed to doing the best they could for their students and while they struggled at times with all of the responsibilities involved in becoming a teacher, they also maintained a commitment to equitable teaching practices. Although what each meant by equitable teaching practices varied each was influenced by the conceptualization of social justice mathematics education above.

Tools of Analysis

Gee explains that "the goal of discourse analysis is to render even Discourses with which we are familiar 'strange'" (2005, p. 102). By rendering the common discourses "strange" we will be more able to see the ideologies underlying these discourses, why they exist, and whose purposes they serve. I approached this process using Gee's (2005) seven "building tasks." These building tasks are the various things people do by using discourses. According to Gee (2005), in speaking and being in the world people build significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and significance for sign systems. Examples of these are given below. Of these building tasks significance, identity, relationships, politics, and connections were the most significant for understanding the issues around discourses that I explored here. Consider the following, brief transcript from one of our class discussions on how schools and teachers can affect students' access to mathematics courses.

433. *Gavin*: But even if they have those kinds of options
434. what kind of students are going to want to come in during summer
435. to catch up on something [they're not necessarily sure they want to do.]
436. *Stella:*   [Yeah.
437. *Stella:* Yeah and they have to pay money to do it
438. and their parents have to drive them there.
439. *Gavin:* It restricts the access I think.
440. *Teacher:* Yeah I was just going to say is that really access?

Significance

We build significance by what we draw attention to (or away from). In this portion of the discussion Gavin makes the group of students that he is talking about significant by using the

phrase "kind of" (l. 434) rather than simply "students". This draws attention to these students, distinguishes these students from students generally, and makes them more significant.

Identity

One way that we build identity (or subject positions) through discourse is by who is positioned as agent (the subject of the sentence) and in what way. All of Gavin's and Stella's comments focus on the students. They build identities for students as uninterested in mathematics (l. 435) and unwilling or unable to confront obstacles to come to summer school (ll. 437-438). Of course Stella and Gavin are also building their own identities as knowledgeable about students and school systems. In contrast, in my statement (l. 440), I am the agent. In this way I draw attention to myself and present an identity as a critic.

Relationships

We build relationships both with the other speakers present and with others who may not be present. By using "yeah" (ll. 436, 437, 440) Stella and I both signal a relationship with Gavin that is supportive of him and what he is saying. In particular Stella's use of "yeah and" (l. 437) mark her comment as an extension of Gavin's thought and suggest a relationship of mutual agreement.

Politics

We build politics through discourse based on the implications of these discourses for the distribution of social goods. Our discussion above, with its focus on who has access to the social good of mathematics education, is explicitly political, but this explicit politics is not necessary for a conversation to have political implications. Prior to the discussion above Stella had brought up a summer school program that would allow students to move from general to honors mathematics. Gavin's opening comment is in response to this and suggests that the program does little to increase access. This aligns him as someone who advocates increased access, possibly based on untracked classes. My comment carries similar implications. Stella's comment more directly suggests that the social good of mathematics education should not be connected to money or transportation, which also possibly supports untracked classes.

Connections

We build connections by creating links between ideas and objects. In this case Stella links issues of finance (l. 437) and transportation (l. 438) to the issue of access to mathematics classes. This link is not a natural part of the definition of access, however, this link may be a common one in some discourses and not in others. In making this link Stella frames the idea of access in a way that has specific political implications (see above).

Even in a brief transcript we build many different things through the discourses that we use. While all of these building tasks may be present in any given selection of text, some will be more relevant to a particular analysis than others. Additionally some of the tasks will be more prominent than others in different selections of text. As I present my analyses I generally draw on

only one or two of the tasks at a time in order to present a more coherent argument. Fairclough (2001) adds that a discourse analyst should look at the experiential (how an experience is represented), relational (how relationships are constructed), expressive (the author's evaluation), and connective (how parts of discourse are connected) aspects of discourse. In particular a researcher should pay attention to how these aspects of discourse constrain and involve contents, relations, and subjects. This process allows for an analysis of how power is taken up, used, and influences people in a particular situation.

Critical Discourse Analysis draws on post-structural understandings of discourse and the circulation of power (Rogers et al, 2005).Of particular importance is the idea that as speakers use discourse they construct the objects and subject positions that they speak about. This view of discourse is in contrast to views of language as referential. The referential view of language places a sharp division between a physical object or idea and its name. Thus the word "teacher" only refers to a teacher and does not influence what it means to be a teacher. Within the post-structuralist view, even discursively constructed objects and subject positions are multiple and changing; they are continually negotiated and re-created. Thus my analysis portrays the multiplicity of possibilities in the presented data, names the dominant discourses and how they constrain what we can think, and how our use of discourse reflects the binaries of these discourses. I have also framed these discourses within Whiteness Theory to analyze the ways in which these discourses maintain White privilege and how we begin to re-work and undo some of these discourses in order to understand teaching mathematics for social justice. Specifically, I use Whiteness Theory to identify the binaries set up by our discourses and then revisit my analysis to identify the binaries that I present in my analysis.

Data Collection

All data for this study are drawn from a larger study on a teacher research and professional development course for these seven preservice teachers. Because of the makeup of the class I brought a social justice in mathematics focus to the work that we did. Each class was recorded and transcribed, resulting in over 25 hours of data. The teacher candidates' written work provided additional data. As I reviewed the data I chose those sections where there was evidence of, or potential for, addressing issues of social justice within mathematics education. I performed line-by-line analysis of each of these transcripts using Gee's building tasks. From these analyses I identified themes and then re-analyzed the transcripts to look for key ideas I had missed. I also presented some of my analyses to colleagues and at times adjusted interpretations in light of feedback from others. Key transcripts were re-analyzed in order to fill out the themes in detail.

Sample Analyses

In this section I present my analyses of two transcripts. In the first I show how including my own discourse in the transcript is a key aspect of interpreting the discourses and in demonstrating the difficulty of disrupting the dominant discourse at play. In the second transcript I show how my original analysis furthered White-centered conceptions of progressive teaching that prevented developing deeper understandings of teaching mathematics for social justice. For both analyses I provide explanatory comments to explain my thinking or how I applied aspects of methodology.

In an attempt to address the concerns above I brought together CDA with Walshaw's (2013) recognition that teachers as well as students are caught up in the dominant discourses of

mathematics, and Thompson's (2003) notion of Dr. Lincolns—White anti-racist educators who reinscribe Whiteness. These understandings required that I as the teacher/researcher include myself in the analysis of discourse to reveal how I also contribute to and am caught up in the discourses that reinforce dominant norms. I attempted this in two ways. I included my speech as I conducted my analysis and then conducted secondary analyses to reveal the ways in which my analysis also draws on and maintains dominant discourses. Thus there are two implications for the critical discourse analyst—to include in the analysis how in our interaction with participants we contribute to/disrupt dominant discourses and how in our presentation of analyses we contribute to/disrupt dominant discourses. This kind of reflexivity is key to the truth-telling project. Without this reflexivity CDA can be used to critique prevailing ideologies and norms, however it will simultaneously (and uncritically) reassert other dominant discourses, in particular the discourse of progressive White goodness. Truth-telling in CDA requires that our own discourse use in research and writing be brought within the scope of our critical discourse analysis. In attempting to include this reflexivity in my analysis my own role as researcher and social justice educator are called into question and examined.

Including the Researcher in Analysis

In preparation for our fourth class I asked the students to read selections from Gee's *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (2nd Edition) and Fairclough's *Language and Power* (2nd Edition). Prior to this class we had spent some time exploring what action research is, what it means to be a teacher, teaching mathematics for social justice, and understanding how mathematics shapes our world. During class I showed the teacher candidates a video clip[2] explaining the history and development of the telephone number pad, to illustrate how one discourse can come to dominate and exclude alternatives. My intention in this class was to open up discussion about the way discourses around mathematics, teaching, and mathematics teaching influence us (as mathematics teachers) to teach and interact in certain (fairly consistent) ways as a group and how these discourses also influence the way students understand the nature of mathematics. The preservice teachers engaged with these ideas readily and in depth, especially in exploring the ways that discourse shapes our experiences and thinking. In later classes they regularly referred back to this class and what they learned from our discussions. The language of discourse and ideology appeared to have allowed them to articulate more critical views around mathematics and mathematics education.

The transcript that follows came late in this class. We had discussed multiple ideas about how discourses operate and their influence on us. Immediately prior we had shifted focus to identify dominant discourses in mathematics education, their sources, and their influence on us. We first discussed teacher authority and the hidden curriculum of school mathematics. This led to a discussion of the historical development of mathematics and of White male dominance in what is now school mathematics. In this transcript Lisa playfully critiques mathematics teachers (including those of us in the class) by comparing mathematics teachers to clueless nobility.

1. *Lisa:* I think that's true even today
2. they ((students))[3] say math is not useful in life
3. and we're like

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2. http://www.numberphile.com/videos/keypad_layout.html.
3. Double parentheses ((xxxxx)) indicate clarifying comments that I have inserted into the text.

4. "oh you silly like commoners[4]

5. of course you say that

6. you don't think it's useful" and they're [like

7. ***Teacher:***   ["You just don't understand it well enough

8. to make the connection"

9. ***Lisa:*** They don't think they're good at math

10. because we reinforce it like

11. "Well give up now."

Lines 12-20 ((Jeff comments on the importance of mathematics in modern times))

21. ***Jeff:*** I mean you went to work in the coal mine or whatever

22. you know if you were a commoner

23. and if you were them ((nobility))

24. you didn't need it ((mathematics)) you know you had money already

25. ***Teacher:*** Kind of a game. In some sense.

26. ***Lisa:*** Math is a game?

27. ***Teacher:*** Yeah. For the elites in that sense.

28. It's a pretty cool game

29. it's interesting

30. ***Jeff:*** Says the math teacher.

31. ***Teacher:*** Yeah. Exactly. And you all should learn it.

32. ***Jeff:*** You're so elitist.

33. ***Multiple:*** ((laughing))

34. ***Teacher:*** So this is this is why I put misconceptions in quotes.

35. ***Lisa:*** Yeah.

36. ***Teacher:*** Because this isn't how mathematicians think about math

37. but it is how we

38. speaking of math teachers in general

39. have taught students to think about math.

40. We probably weren't trying to teach them to think about math in these ways

41. but that's the way math has traditionally been taught

42. to emphasize these things ((indicates our list about the hidden curriculum on the board))

As this section begins, Lisa picks up a comment I had made earlier about the influence of European nobility on the development of school mathematics and turns it into a critique of the role mathematics teachers play in excluding students from mathematics. Notice Lisa's use of "we" (l. 3, l. 10) to include herself and the rest of us in this critique. Jeff also picks up on this use of "we" (l. 18) as do I (l. 37). Further, the comparison she makes, casting mathematics teachers as clueless nobles and students as disgruntled commoners is not an obvious one. Lisa's critique culminates in her statement to students to "give up now" (l. 11) even though most teachers would never (explicitly) tell a student to give up. Lisa's use of a mocking voice to imitate both nobility and teachers creates a parallel between her comments in ll. 4-6 and in l. 11. In both cases they are comments that most teachers would never speak aloud. Lisa does not mean these as literal statements, rather that teachers send these messages to students in more subtle ways through words and actions.

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4. The use of quotes in this transcript indicates that the speaker is making an imitation rather than reporting speech.

Jeff continues Lisa's comparison (ll. 21-24) noting that for the nobility mathematics was not a necessity for subsistence. Responding to Jeff's point I suggest that mathematics could then be a game for them. The nobility did not need mathematics to be practical, even if it was sometimes. Jeff and I play with this idea back and forth (ll. 27-33) in a way that highlights the potential for elitism in approaching mathematics (exclusively) as an abstract game. In this way the discussion has allowed us to reframe mathematics as a game suggesting a potentially disruptive discourse of mathematics education.

Lisa's initial comment and the discussion that follows occurs within the binary that mathematics must either be useful (applied, l. 2) or abstract (pure, ll. 25-26). What Lisa's comparison makes plain is the problematic relationship that this binary sets up between mathematics teachers and students. Within this binary the only possibilities for mathematics are that it be either pure or applied. Pure mathematics is considered the most prestigious and mathematics teachers, as representatives of a kind of mathematics community, feel an obligation to defend it, even when it means putting students down, as Lisa has suggested here. This obligation is connected both to the status that accompanies pure mathematics, but also because many mathematics teachers enjoy mathematics. Framing mathematics as a game potentially falls outside the pure/applied binary.

After the laughter subsides, I sum up the discussion by tying it back to where we began (l. 34). I summarize this most recent portion of the discussion (ll. 36-39) emphasizing the critique that Lisa brought in that mathematics teachers are largely responsible for what students think about mathematics. Consistently in our comments Lisa, Jeff, and I have placed responsibility on mathematics teachers for the ideas that students develop about mathematics. However, as I continue I soften this critique by excusing mathematics teachers from this responsibility (ll. 40-42). I am in these lines trying to be a "good" teacher educator. As a "good" teacher I do not want to place blame on the mathematics teachers that these teacher candidates work with nor on the teacher candidates themselves. I had been concerned going into this class that the teacher candidates would be resistant to some of my critiques of mathematics education. In order to reduce (potential) resistance I softened our critique by pointing out the lack of intentionality (l. 40) on the part of mathematics teachers. Connecting intentionality to responsibility, as I did here, is a classic way to maintain a White sense of goodness (Applebaum, 2010), and deflect taking responsibility for making meaningful change. I am attempting to make this class a "safe space" for the teacher candidates, but also for myself, as a White teacher. However, when making a conversation safe becomes a means of avoiding potentially difficult conversations then the dominant (White) discourses are maintained (Yoon, 2012). By bringing normative goodness back into the discussion I weaken Lisa's critique and reinforce the traditional teaching of mathematics that excludes so many students.

One of the challenges of disrupting dominant discourses is the creation of new or alternative discourses. As I sum up the discussion I reduce the possible alternatives by reasserting the dominant discourse. Had I either not included or not analyzed this portion of the transcript my role in the maintenance of dominant discourses would have been hidden. While there were certainly times when the students also brought in dominant discourses, recognizing my role in this process points to a common practice in teacher discourse (summarizing discussion) as a moment when dominant discourses can sneak back into the discussion. Further, the manner in which I bring the dominant discourse back in, promotes a particular form of White goodness that potentially hinders discussion of social justice.

Secondary Analysis

One of the challenges that I regularly faced in my analysis was to recognize and challenge those moments when we were adopting teaching strategies that I agreed with (such as constructivism or student-centered teaching), but that were not necessarily social justice focused. Because mathematics education still largely follows a traditional teacher-centered pedagogy I wanted to highlight and celebrate those moments when my students embraced more progressive pedagogies. However, since these pedagogies do not promote social justice I had to reanalyze them with a view towards social justice and how my positive presentation of progressive pedagogy may inhibit an understanding of social justice mathematics.

Background Information

In her reflection journal below Stella describes a change in her thinking regarding how she works with her students. Stella did her work in a small, diverse mathematics and science focused charter school. Her mentor teacher regularly used progressive reform teaching methods, but did not necessarily extend into social justice. She was supportive and encouraging of Stella, but also expected her to closely follow the textbook for the class. This mixture of support and limits helped Stella develop her ability to use reform methods, but may have limited what she could do in terms of social justice. Her writings seem to reflect this support and limits as they focus mainly on her learning about reform values and beliefs. In this journal entry Stella describes how she learns from her students to better meet their needs and not overstep her own use of authority.

Week 5, 2/18/2014

 Student Teaching Reflections:

1. I had a great time with student teaching this week. I've realized lately that when I'm
2. struggling to manage my classroom, I get sort of tense and micromanage my students
3. too much.
Lines 3-10 ((Stella explains balancing student participation with keeping the lesson moving)).
11. I've also started to realize that off-task behavior is not always what I think it looks
12. like. For instance, some of my students listen better when drawing, and for some
13. writing notes down seems to be more of a hindrance than a help, etc. While I think it
14. is important to do some note writing, I shouldn't require all of my students to write
15. everything down, or to be sitting up perfectly and watching me while I talk, etc. That
16. would be insisting that students learn equally rather than equitably. I've realized that I
17. came into teaching with a picture of what learning looks like, and in some cases I've
18. tried to force that on my students. However, in reality, the best learning environment
19. for a student might look different than the picture in my head. I've tried to listen more
20. to my students, and observe the bigger picture more than the small behaviors. For
21. instance, one day this week I experimented with a student and tried to give her more
22. freedom than usual. I usually ask her several times throughout the class to get her
23. notebook out and write things down, even though her homework and tests show that
24. she is keeping up well with the material. I let her go throughout the class without

25. asking her to write things down, and I noticed she was more attentive and actually
26. wrote a few key things down in her notebook. Perhaps this is a better way of learning
27. for this student. Listening to students in this way is less stressful for me (because I'm
28. not trying to manage their every action) and I think more beneficial to their learning.
29. While allowing this kind of freedom may not be possible in every case (some
30. behaviors may be detrimental to a particular students, or even to the class as a whole),
31. I think getting to know your students in this way is an important part of teaching!

Stella starts out by describing her tendency to "micromanage" (l. 2) her students. She links this tendency to her ability to manage her classroom (l. 2). In linking these two she takes responsibility for this struggle (drawing on dominant discourses of responsibility) in her teaching rather than laying blame on her students' behavior requiring "micromanagement." This led her to question what "off-task behavior" (l. 11) is. As a result, instead of trying to be more controlling of student behavior, she tried to exercise less control. She describes her previous ways of thinking as using her authority to gain compliance ("require all of my students to write everything down" ll. 15-16 and "I've tried to force that on my students" ll. 17-18). In contrast, now Stella "tried to listen more" (l. 19), "tried to give her more freedom" (ll. 21-22), and "let her go" (l. 24). However, even in these new ways of thinking, which are more respectful to students, Stella positions herself as the main authority since she is the one giving freedom and allowing (or not) different student behaviors. This freedom for her students is conditional and will continue when the results ("more attentive" l. 25 and "wrote a few key things down" l. 26) meet Stella's approval. In this way Stella is the judge of what are acceptable ways of participating in her class, but she also is questioning the way her practices, in particular her use of authority, affect her students individually.

As Stella continued her student teaching, her thinking again shifted in regards to her use of authority in managing student behavior. This time the shift occurred as she learned from watching other teachers at her school.

Week 7, 3/3/2014:

Lines 1-6 ((Stella describes how parent meetings are set up at her school))
6. I was able to offer
7. suggestions for how we could help Amy succeed in my classroom at the beginning of
8. the meeting, and as the meeting went on I was struck by how much the other teachers
9. were asking Amy questions rather than trying to offer suggestions for help. Most of the
10. meeting was spent asking her how she was feeling about her classes, why she was
11. engaging in different behaviors, if she had friends and who they were, if she was
12. happy at this school, how they could help her in their classes, etc. I thought it was
13. so cool that it seemed like these teachers called this meeting in order to better
14. understand Amy so that they could meet her individual needs, rather than going into
15. the meeting assuming they understood Amy based on her observed behaviors (as I
16. did!).
17. I definitely learned a lot from observing these teachers interact with Amy and her
18. parents. I feel like I say over and over again that I want to get to know students and
19. understand their individual needs (i.e. teach them equitably), but I'm learning that I
20. don't always know how to do that, and oftentimes I assume things about students
21. without even realizing that I'm doing it. We found out at this meeting that Amy has

22. Aspergers, which no one knew beforehand (75% of the school year has gone by
23. already!). I was amazed at how a handful of things that Amy's parents told us about
24. herself and her behaviors changed my view of her. After this meeting, I was thinking
25. back on interactions I've had with Amy where I would have treated her differently if I
26. would've known she had Aspergers. Things like Amy's problem turning in
27. homework, and her baffled, confused, nervous reaction when I ask her to get her
28. homework out. Previously, this situation looked like Amy had not done her
29. homework but was trying to cover it with the excuse that she couldn't find it over and
30. over, but in the meeting I learned that a legitimate behavior of Amy's is that she has
31. trouble remembering things like this and being consistent, and she becomes
32. uncomfortable and nervous with confrontational interactions like I've had with her. If
33. I would've known this, I would've reminded her about her homework at the beginning
34. of class and given her more time and space to turn it in, or I would've talked to her
35. one-on-one after class instead of in front of her table so she wouldn't be overwhelmed
36. with so many people around her. I've also noticed Amy drawing a lot during class
37. lately when she should be engaging in tasks with her team. I've been asking her to put
38. her notebook away, but she hasn't been responding very well. Through talking about
39. this issue in our meeting, I learned that Amy draws when she gets overwhelmed, and
40. it's been happening more since I put her at a table with four people instead of three. I
41. wish I would've taken the time to talk to Amy one-on-one so I could have found out
42. this information earlier and helped her succeed and enjoy my class! This meeting
43. opened my eyes to the fact that students' behavioral problems always have a source,
44. and seeking to understand what that source is makes it so much easier to address that
45. students' needs. I think teaching students' my expectations is also totally valid, but
46. when I notice that consistently reminding students of those expectations isn't
47. working, then I need to seek out that student and try to understand them.

The main thing that began to help Stella think differently about how she approaches her students, was observing other teachers asking questions (ll. 8-9). The other teachers asked Amy multiple questions about her learning, behavior, feelings, and how they could help her. Stella contrasts this approach with her own, which consisted of "assuming" (l. 15) that she already understood Amy. As a result Stella recognizes the limitations of her abilities ("I don't always know how to do that" ll. 19-20; "without even realizing that I'm doing it" l. 21) despite her intent to "understand their individual needs" (l. 19). The things that she learned about Amy from her parents caused her to re-evaluate past interactions. As she describes these previous situations she describes thinking from a deficit perspective about Amy ("Amy's problem" l. 26; "trying to cover it" l. 29; "she hasn't been responding very well" l. 38), but does not critique these assumptions.

While critiquing these assumptions could help Stella develop a more socially just treatment of her students, it would require that she point her flaws out to me. Stella does note that her choices made the problems worse and that she could have avoided these situations had she "taken the time to talk to Amy" (l. 41). She concludes by proposing a balance between "teaching students my expectations" (l. 45) and trying to "understand" (l. 47) her students. However, understanding comes only after there is a problem with her expectations (ll. 46-47), thus they are still given primacy. Stella's journal entries illustrate a back and forth between teacher-centered and student-centered thinking, where the teacher-centered remains dominant but is conceding to a more respectful approach to working with students.

Student-centered approaches to teaching are still fairly uncommon in secondary mathematics education (Ellis & Berry, 2005). Thus Stella's move in this direction feels like significant progress and I wanted to highlight it as I did in my responses to Stella's journal as well as in my analysis here. Stella's emphasis on these points may also reflect a White, progressive idealization of education reforms. However, just because teaching becomes more "student-centered" does not mean that it also becomes more socially just. It is tempting to suggest that student-centered teaching addresses an identity dimension of equity. However, as Gutiérrez (2012) explains, identity includes students drawing on their own resources and becoming better people by their own standards. There is no mention of that here, rather the standards are still Stella's (or the dominant discourses of mathematics education as represented by Stella), which are assumed to be universal (hence White) standards. Since these discourses, are discourses of Whiteness, my initial presentation of them as indicating more equitable mathematics education ended up reasserting the dominant hold of these discourses on mathematics education. Re-analysis, with an explicit equity focus, revealed how I am also caught up in these dominant discourses (Walshaw, 2013).

Conclusion and Implications

As a critical methodology, CDA is an important tool to critique dominant discourses and to enact change. However, dominant discourses of Whiteness obscure truth and resist change by overtly and covertly deflecting attention away from our own contributions to dominant discourses. Truth-telling thus requires that I, as researcher and educator, critically engage my work to reveal my contributions to and entanglement with the maintenance of Whiteness (Thompson, 2003; Walshaw, 2013). This is necessary to continually remake my own educational and research practices. However, it is also meant to shake the complacency of progressive, White academics (including my own) to engage in the creation of socially just educational practices.

In this study, where my aim was to understand our efforts and struggles to bring together the apparently disparate discourses of mathematics and social justice, understanding myself in relation to these discourses and to my students became a key aspect of truth-telling. There were times when I contributed to the power of dominant discourses and times when my teaching aided our efforts to break out of dominant discourses. Including this in analysis better prepares me to change my teaching practice and to better prepare teachers to teach for social justice. Further as I presented my analysis in writing there were times when my desires to promote progressive pedagogical practices in mathematics education (such as constructivist practices or student-centered teaching) caused me to overlook the ways in which these practices may trump the promotion of social justice. Recognizing these moments and my role in them required that I reanalyze selections of text multiple times and seek the feedback of committed critical scholars who pointed out these aspects of my analysis.

The sample analyses presented above demonstrate the potential of CDA as a means of truth-telling. However, CDA alone is insufficient, and (on its own) may mask some of the truth the analyst intends to uncover. I have proposed two methodological considerations when using CDA in an educational context. First that the analyst include both student and teacher discourse use in analysis. This stance disrupts the apparent "truth" of teacher as more enlightened than the student (Thompson, 2003) and recognizes that both are caught up in dominant discourses (Walshaw 2013). In the case of teacher education this component is key to disrupting the reassertion of dominant discourses from one generation of teachers to the next. In the sample I presented above, Lisa's critique of mathematics teachers as clueless nobility opened up a possible reframing of

school mathematics as a game. While this reframing may or may not have led to a discourse of school mathematics more open to discourses of social justice, it was, an alternative to the dominant discourse of school mathematics as necessary for students. However, in my attempt to minimize the culpability of mathematics teachers I shut down this alternative and reasserted the dominant discourses.

The second addition to CDA was the necessity of submitting our critiques to analysis. In my second example, my original analysis of Stella's journal entries highlighted her improvement in adopting a more student-centered approach in her teaching. However, this analysis maintained (masking the truth) of the progressive (White) assumption that a student-centered approach to teaching is inherently socially just. This assumption (and my original analysis) fail to recognize the Whiteness of this approach to education that often assumes a universal (White) student and maintains the dominance of the content and the teacher's priorities with a mask of student-choice. In my reanalysis of this section, rather than cover up the flaws of my first analysis, I present and then critique them. This aspect of truth-telling challenges the status quo of research articles as complete and polished and instead recognizes the multiple potential analyses of data and their potential to disrupt and/or reassert dominant discourses within academia.

When used in conjunction with CDA these additional components of analysis provide both a more thorough critique of the reassertion of dominant discourse and a better understanding of why we fail to develop alternative discourses when we set out to do so. This truth-telling can further our efforts to disrupt these discourses in research and in education, thereby aiding educators in developing pedagogies which promote the development of alternative discourses. They may also aid researchers in changing the ways in which analysis is presented and in developing alternative discourses as part of analysis.

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Jazz Researchers: Riding the Dissonance of Pedagogy and Inquiry

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Abstract

Drawing from a two-year ethnographic study, this article establishes jazz as an epistemological metaphor for critical participatory action research. The author juxtaposes the tensions inherent in jazz music and critical participatory research methodologies to provide a framework for understanding how dissonance can become a productive element for meaning making and Truth-telling. The article establishes three major implications for critical researchers: 1) The desirability of discomfort in critical qualitative research as a means to avoid stagnation; 2) the "crisis-generating" potential of jazz epistemologies as an approach to critical participatory action research; and, 3) the emergence of new perspectives on research and pedagogy from the intersections of critical research and teaching practices.

Keywords: jazz, jazz epistemologies, dissonance, critical participatory research

> *Jazz requires what might be considered a certain irreverence toward the music as written. This irreverence does not imply a lack of respect for the composer or the music, but a sense of participation with the composer in the creative process. The music serves as an outline for the new event, rather than an untouchable and finished creation, not to be tampered with.*
> –Oldfather & West, 1994

In conjuring forms of knowledge that "*begin* with the pile-age of wreckage," Cornel West (in Taylor, 2008) lays a foundational premise for the understanding of critical epistemologies, and thus critical research methodologies. Research that is born from an understanding of and intimacy with the depths of lived despair illuminate particular truths that are skeptical of the status quo and hostile to social stagnation. These are truths that are ugly to look at and difficult to reconcile. They exist when critical race theorists suggest that racism is endemic to and thus a permanent aspect of U.S. society. They exist when Marxists uncover that certain forms of educational resistance among the working class serve to reify their socioeconomic position within a classed hierarchy (Willis, 1977). They exist when Indigenous scholars position the project of maintaining a fragile form of democracy as being incommensurable with Native sovereignty (Grande, 2004; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Yet, these critical forms of knowledge are what contain promise, desire, and nuance; rejecting grand narratives and orienting researchers toward complex approaches to unsolvable problems. Critical researchers recognize that our work is about existing in the muck and mire of the

often unanswerable. Still we are called to make meaning, strategize to win, and speak Truth to power. The Truth in this sense lies in the recognition of the iterative wreckage and all of its twisted manifestations that hail critical researchers and are conveniently ignored or rationalized by historical wielders of "reality"-constituting power. Simultaneously, drawing on the multiple and often dissonant truths that are used to name the wreckages are necessary in order to find the infinite ways out toward natural desires for humanness. In this way, critical researchers must search for Truth, while sifting through truths.

In his assertion that a different mode of thinking comes from beginning with "the pile-age of wreckage", West was not referring to critical research methodologies. He was talking about the epistemologies of jazz and the blues, which he argues come from a foundation of "the catastrophic." He riffs, "the blues is personal catastrophe lyrically expressed." Using the prolific saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker symbolically, West (in Taylor, 2008) reiterates his logics of criticality:

> [Rejecting the notion of wholeness] is where jazz starts. Do you think Charlie Parker's upset because he can't sustain a harmony? He didn't care about the harmony. He's trying to completely ride on the dissonance, ride on the blue notes….Why start with this obsession on wholeness?

Critical researchers, like Parker did with his instrument of meaning making, attempt to ride on the dissonance, searching for ways to break apart the imagined whole so as to re-envision it; yet knowing that the whole—societal harmony—can never exist. With this in mind, the challenge for critical researchers is to consider how the "pile-age of wreckage" and "the catastrophic," as forms of knowledge, can result in something as optimistically future-oriented as jazz.

Attempting to meet this challenge, this article explores how jazz as an epistemological construct, and then as a metaphorical research methodology (Dixson, 2006; Oldfather & West, 1994; White & Hermes, 2005), necessarily maintains a symbiotic relationship between the individual and collective in a search for the Truth of dissonance. Jazz, as an overarching framework, serves as the backdrop for analyzing the ways in which liberatory Truth is able to navigate structures of oppression, specifically with regard to the experiences of youth of African descent in educational systems, acting as public intellectuals, set on impacting collective consciousness and public policy. I explore how researcher/educator positionalities can conflate research and teaching in what I describe as an *irreversible methodology*, where there comes a point when previously delineated teaching and research practices become indistinguishable (Freire, 1982). The multidimensional aspects of research methods are explored through the symbolism of jazz, as each of the "players" learned to work independently within a collective structure that was democratically created.

The article explores how the youths' Truth-telling informed my teaching and research, and their positionality as community-based documentarians, and organic, public intellectual knowledge producers. The broader critical ethnographic study that this article explores is set in a community-based organization in St. Paul, Minnesota where the youth—who were my students, co-researchers, and research participants—were enrolled in a course under my instruction where they received high school and college credit. The course was a hybrid of Africana studies and action research methods, designed for the youth to understand and apply epistemological frameworks from African knowledge systems (Harris, 2011) to their research on issues most directly

impacting their lives. The youth in the study focused their research on the creation, and maintenance through media, of the term "ghetto" in depicting black youth.

There are three major implications discussed in this article. The first is the desirability of discomfort (Ginwright, 2010; Kumashiro, 2002) in critical qualitative research and critical dialogic teaching. As with jazz music, comfort in the process of research and learning amounts to stagnation. Pillow (2003) suggests that researchers interrogate feelings of comfort as they can lead to blind spots with regard to counter-narratives of hegemonic truths. Pedagogical research that seeks moments of crisis on the part of the researchers and learners can prevent these moments of comfort and maintain hesitancy (reflexive practice) in research and teaching in the face of oppressive conditions. The second implication is the "crisis-generating" potential of jazz epistemology. Oldfather and West (1994), Dixson, (2006), and White and Hermes (2005) have previously explored the parallels between jazz, qualitative research methods, and critical theory. This article builds from their theorizations by honing in on the convergence of critical research methodologies and critical pedagogy, where the result becomes a wonderfully dissonant jazz tune rife with complexity and promise.

Oldfather and West (1994) write, "In contrast to the formal concert hall atmosphere of classical music, jazz is at home in nightclubs and bars. Jazz performers undergo their 'naked' creative struggles in front of an audience, whereas classical performers do so in private rehearsals" (p. 24). In similar ways jazz researchers live out dilemmas of tension and contradiction in the midst of the research process. I explore how jazz musicians and jazz researchers encounter moments of tension between the individual and collective, which have the potential to reach new places of thought and action, or settle back into established structures. Examining these moments of tension (crises) allows for greater understanding of how they can be intentionally created and the conditions needed to do so. Finally, I examine the *irreversible methodology* that emerged as a manifestation of joining critical ethnography, youth participatory action research (yPAR), and critical dialogic pedagogy. By focusing on the trajectories of historical, present, and future acts, I examine how these methodologies can be applied to understand the process of learning through critical participatory inquiry dedicated to youth public intellectualism and activism amidst oppressive conditions.

Engagement: Getting into the groove

In reference to cultural relevance in education, Ladson-Billings (2006) suggests that it is not what educators *do* that should be foregrounded but rather how they *think*. Her implication is that the way educators understand ourselves and our students in relation to the world—our ways of being in the world—will directly impact what it is that we do. Gevonee Ford, the executive director of Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD), which was the setting for this study, often makes this point more plainly, by saying, "The way you think about a *thang*, determines what you do about a *thang*." The same idea applies to research. For researchers, it is more important to focus on understanding our role within the histories that constitute research traditions than to simply begin doing the "research thang." This is why a deep understanding of methodology is crucial. Methodology is a mediating factor for researchers that bridges the thinking and the doing. Methodology contains epistemological underpinnings that shape researchers' thoughts and actions when designing research, generating data, analyzing data, or representing themselves and others through writing and the dissemination of their work. I want to be careful, however, and not suggest that there is such a clear, linear distinction between thinking and

doing. The epistemology of jazz would suggest that thinking and doing are synergistic and often simultaneous. The recognition of oneself as a critical researcher entails certain dispositions toward the work of research that could be likened to the ways in which jazz musicians are predisposed to approach their practice, finding comfort in dissonance. Thus, it is important to examine the dispositions inherent in critical participatory action research as they relate to dissonance and discomfort in research.

In order to illuminate the methodological dispositions and underpinnings of this study, I first explore the idea and centrality of engaged research, which cannot be separated from critical research, with regard to my work. Jazz is an engaged art form. Jazz musicians feed off of each other in real time to reimagine what is possible. The chords change unexpectedly, rhythms emerge from improvisation, and there exists a natural reciprocity between audiences and practitioners when solos conclude and new sonics emerge. Engaged research holds similarities as collaborators are placed in conversation with each other, encountering the unexpected and being asked to improvise, yet remain true to the original vision of the project.

Mulligan and Nadarajah (2008) correctly suggest that *engaged research* (or *community-engaged research*, among other terms) has become such an overused and broad term that it has begun to lose its meaning and risks losing the counterhegemonic origins from which it grew (Hale, 2008). Inherent in the idea of engaged research is the existence of such a thing as disengaged research, or a form of research that is removed from the reality of the people and environment in which it takes place. The *mestiza* feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) crystallizes the notion of disengagement, writing, "Western culture made 'objects' of things and people when it distanced itself from them, thereby losing 'touch' with them. This dichotomy is the root of all violence" (p. 59). Anzaldúa's powerful and provocative statement, while broad in its framing, could aptly be applied to the historical violence of "academic research." Western conceptions of research traditionally require strict demarcations and distance between researchers (subjects) and the researched (objects). This distance has made it possible for researchers to easily come and go from communities with little regard for the effects of their analysis on objectified peoples. The symbolic violence of research has had wide-reaching and devastating implications for Indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the South Pacific, as well as women, communities of color, impoverished communities, and other marginalized peoples in every corner of the globe.

Yoruba-feminist scholar, Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997), further complicates the notion of disengaged research through her depiction of regional African studies as a chain of incomplete translations: "translation from oral to written, translation from one culture to another, and finally translation from one language to another" (p. 27). Her analysis can be expanded to explain not only the problematic history of continental African research done by European colonizers, but also research conducted throughout the African Diaspora. Oyewumi uses a sophisticated framework to describe the problem of trying to fit some African societies into Western epistemological frameworks. She explains that Western scholarship and culture is overly concerned with observation and seeing as a way of interacting (researching) with others, as opposed to "being" with the world, which she attributes to many Indigenous African communities. She juxtaposes the terms "worldview" and "world-sense" (p. 2) as primary indicators of the difference between Western and African ways of interacting and being. Worldview, in her representation, does not provide a complex enough understanding of how African (specifically Yoruban-Nigerian) people see (or rather *be*) their humanity.

Thus, the importance of seriously and intentionally developing critical research practices that are antithetical to the traditional norms of research becomes clear. Engaged research potentially offers an avenue for research that is not symbolically, or epistemologically, violent (Teo, 2010). Engaged research can broadly be described as systematic inquiry that is embedded in a reciprocal partnership between researchers and communities. Further, critically engaged or activist research with communities actively works to reverse historically constructed asymmetries in power dynamics and knowledge construction while working toward a common goal (Hale, 2008). It does not go so far as to pretend that these asymmetries can be eradicated over short periods of time, or that research from the academy can truly be seen as representing a similar agenda to that of community entities, but by recognizing these realities, engaged researchers can attempt to open more honest channels of dialogue between universities and communities, where a mutually beneficial research agenda has the potential to emerge. Mulligan and Nadarajah (2008) describe several principles of engaged research:

- An overt commitment on the part of the researchers to work in the communities concerned for a matter of years not weeks
- The formation of some form of Critical Reference Group within the communities that can offer frank, helpful and detailed advice on how to proceed.
- Researchers should consult widely about research aims and ways of collecting relevant data.
- Discussions should take place not only in formal meetings, but also in informal settings, over a shared meal perhaps, or in visiting places of local significance.
- Researchers should use a wide range of research methods to tap into the knowledge and experience of the communities concerned. (p. 93)

These principles underlie critical researchers' desires for multiplicity, innovation, and informality that help provide pathways to alternative ways of knowing. At the same time they provide fertile ground for dissonance as a mechanism for researchers to further locate themselves within lived experiences born from the catastrophic. Many of these principles were at the core of the program I was part of developing.

The analysis in this article comes from a two-year critical ethnographic study at a community-based organization called the Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD). NdCAD is an African-centered (Mazama, 2003) family education center located in St. Paul, Minnesota, focused on literacy development and building healthy identity among youth and families of African descent. NdCAD is a learning organization that has developed its own community-based research methodology (Lozenski & Ford, 2014) to explore and illuminate the cultural assets present in the various communities with which it interacts. My work at NdCAD merged Oyewumi's notion of African "world-sense" with many of the community-engaged recommendations of Mulligan and Nadarajah. An integral part of designing the Uhuru Youth Scholars program, which provided the opportunity and context for this study, was the formation of an advisory board, made up of numerous stakeholders from NdCAD, the University of Minnesota, and the broader communities of African descent in the Twin Cities including high school youth and parents.

The program at the center of this analysis is the Uhuru Youth Scholars program (Uhuru) (Lozenski, 2014). Uhuru is a hybrid course designed for teenaged youth, where they receive high school and college credit to explore and conduct youth participatory action research (yPAR) through the lens of African knowledge systems (Harris, 2011). The cohort of youth researchers in

this study took the course with me, while I conducted a critical ethnographic study of their partic-ipatory action research experience, resulting in a multilayered study where I was a researcher, co-researcher, and teacher at different and often overlapping moments. During this year there were five youth in the research cohort. Each of the youth, regardless of their academic trajectory toward postsecondary education, identified the fact that they could receive college credit through the University of Minnesota as a primary reason for enrolling in Uhuru. Nathaniel, an 18-year-old African-American young man grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota. Autumn, a 17 year old, grew up in a suburb touching St. Paul and is self-described as multi-racial. Will, a 19 year old African-American young man, had an extremely transitory childhood, moving with his mother and younger siblings across multiple states since he can remember. AJ, a 17-year-old young woman of self-described mixed-race and ethnicity, grew up between Minnesota and California. Sheekey, a 20 year old immigrant from Liberia living in St. Paul, graduated halfway through the program, but stayed on as a paid intern while he looked for work and a way to continue his education. This article draws primarily from the experiences of Autumn, AJ, Nathaniel, and Will.[1]

The Desirability of Discomfort: Riding the Truth of Dissonance in Teaching and Research

How does one become a jazz researcher? Jazz musicians are created in a multiplicity of ways. Some come into jazz music after being trained in technical musicianship, where they read and compose music, are well-versed in music theory, and have performance experience. Others identify with the sound of jazz and "pick up" instruments in order to learn how to play what their ears identify, with little technical training, only a passion for playing. These musicians all need to reconcile, at some point, how they will deal with the dissonance. Will they recoil and attempt to "fix" it, or will they see it as an opportunity for further exploration? Jazz researchers develop in much the same way, some learning formal research methods in classrooms and others seeing what works and picking it up by what feels right. Below I explicate how intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional dissonance the impacted the youth learning to become critical researchers in these various ways.

Jazz music, as with critical research entails dissonance. This is the space where musicians and researchers learn about themselves. Dissonance as a pathway, or road for leaning, presents itself in many forms, one of which is something like crisis. Crisis is a recurring element in the context of the Uhuru Youth Scholars program, and also as a desirable methodological element within critical research. First, crisis must be reframed so that it does not conjure up its traditionally negative connotation. Crisis can be understood as opportunity and, even further, as a necessary precondition for transformation (Kumashiro, 2002). Crisis, in this sense, is not concerned with injury or violence (McCarty, 2012) but rather an intense discomfort. It is a sociocultural location of active discomfort within the status quo. This can manifest in political, social, and intellectual spaces, or in our self-conceptions of identity. For instance, an identity crisis is a precondition for certain forms of re-evaluation of the self, and re-organizing of responses to life conditions. However, crises do not necessarily result in a generative transformation, and they can often have limiting effects on people's actions and potential for positive change, particularly when experienced through a paradigm of individualism (Lozenski & Ford, 2014). Experiencing crisis in isolation can result in further entrenchment in the status quo, or a space of disequilibrium, as a singular person tries to make meaning of their discomfort. That is the opposite of the environment we tried to

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1. Each of the youth selected their pseudonym.

create in the Uhuru program. Obviously there are no absolute responses to crises, but communal responses are desirable as learning is ultimately a social process.

As the collaborative research unfolded I began to understand crisis as a collective teaching, learning, and research commitment. Kumashiro (2002) writes:

> Education is not something that involves comfortably repeating what we already learned or affirming what we already know. Rather, education involves learning something that disrupts our commonsense view of the world. The crisis that results from unlearning, then, is a necessary and desirable part of antioppressive education. Desiring to learn involves desiring difference and overcoming our resistance to discomfort. (p. 63)

Sometimes technically trained musicians experience crisis in unlearning a viscerally negative response to harmonic dissonance. The goal is not to sit in perpetual modes of crisis, but rather to move from moment to moment of crisis through the development of a reflexive learning practice. And while Kumashiro's work specifically addresses education, I position critical research and education as inhabiting the same space, where there exist obvious parallels.

Kumashiro describes the desirability of discomfort (the catastrophic) with what is already known and predictive through "commonsense" approaches to teaching and research. As a musician and student of jazz music, I see jazz as a powerful metaphor for researching and learning in crisis. As jazz musicians work in concert as a unit, some individual players may push the bounds of the established structure through improvisational soloing or rhythmic experimentation. This aberration in the structure of the song then causes other musicians to adapt in order to maintain a sense of the rhythmic or harmonic elements of the song. Often the moments of crisis in jazz simply resettle into the established structure; however, there are times when these crises lead to new keys, rhythmic styles, or unknown directions—possibilities rising out of dissonance. Every improvisational shift has the potential to open new opportunities for crisis and resist predictability. The collective aspect of jazz allows for these crises to occur in supportive spaces where they typically do not result in catastrophic collapses.

These moments of interpersonal and collective tensions or crises formed the basis for Uhuru's research. Consider Autumn's and my description of how the group's research questions developed to a research methods class at the University of Minnesota.[2]

> **Autumn:** Me and this other student (Nathaniel), we were arguing about who we thought was "ghetto" and this guy walked on the bus and he was African American and he had his pants sagging, he smelled like weed, and he was just very – he kind of frightened me a little bit…. And I was just like, "this dude is ghetto." And Nathaniel was like, "No man! He's not ghetto, he just knows what's up." And me and him had this huge debate about what is "ghetto" and he brought it to class, and had this huge discussion.
>
> **Brian:** This conversation that turned into a classroom discussion – became a unit of analysis for us. Right? It became well, "what does ghetto mean?" "How do we understand

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2. I was asked to speak to a graduate-level class of pre-service and practicing teachers at the University of Minnesota about yPAR as a research methodology. I thought it would be more useful to bring some of the Uhuru Youth Scholars with me to demonstrate that the purpose of yPAR is to position those most impacted by an issue as the researchers and experts of that issue. Autumn was excited to help me plan the session, so we worked together outside of class time to put together our presentation. On the day of the presentation, Will and Sheekey decided to join us to document the presentation as part of our research.

that?" "Where does it come from?" "What is this?" "How can we learn more about this?" "How can we understand this more deeply?" So taking our own interests in this idea, and then taking it out and doing what we call "exploratory data analysis" of taking our own ideas but then also going out to those we consider our community and seeing what their interest is and our interest, and how we can merge those two.

Autumn and I explored how a mundane conversation, when mediated by yPAR, became a research project. This improvisational aspect of yPAR allows for youth interest to become the organizing force for thinking and research design. Traditional, or less participatory research designs are not necessarily conceived through the dilemma of the person experiencing the problem. More often, outsiders construct the problem for the research participants. For the Uhuru Youth Scholars, Autumn and Nathaniel's disagreement on the way to class grew into our unit of analysis for the year. Specifically, the research questions the group decided to investigate were:

1. What is the impact of the media on the representation of black youth as "ghetto?"
2. How does the media help create and maintain stereotypes of black youth as "ghetto?"

Using these questions, the Uhuru Youth Scholars began to design and conduct a mostly qualitative study of this issue, by interviewing peers, adults, and experts in the field. They documented popular TV shows and Internet websites to track how black youth were being represented. However, during the course of the research process another interpersonal crisis emerged. This crisis was precipitated by a disagreement between Autumn and AJ about what the term *ghetto* even meant. Autumn described the encounter to the class at the University of Minnesota:

[In trying to describe which peers to interview based on their experiences] I was kind of describing who I thought was (labeled) "ghetto" and another student in the class (AJ) said, "So you think I'm ghetto, 'cause what you described is just like me?" So I was just like, "Ahhh, I'm sorry." But, it's just how the way I was raised and how that person who I thought these things [about] made me feel.

This tension between Autumn and AJ served as a springboard that pushed the group to crisis by considering not only how media has influenced the creation and maintenance of the stereotype of black youth as "ghetto," but also how and why they had internalized these messages. As in a jazz arrangement, this moment marked a shift in the rhythmic structure of our work. The emphasis of the research was no longer outward, but more introspective. The dissonance in how Autumn and AJ perceived each other's blackness became more interesting, and thus, like Charlie Parker, our collective made the decision to "ride on the dissonance."

The shift in rhythmic structure and the resulting harmonic dissonance of our research required the youth to use alternate methods of qualitative data collection. They began interviewing each other about their personal histories and experiences with education, race, and other factors that they believed influenced their thinking, such as the media they consumed (e.g., music, movies). They video-documented mundane daily interactions, trying to discover why they did certain things without a second thought. They kept reflective "metacognitive journals" (Ladson-Billings, 2006) where they wrote about their own thinking. They also wrote improvisational and analytical

pieces about prevalent issues in their lives. One could have described their new direction as "autoethnographic" (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2012; Ellis, 2004) because there remained a systematicity to their self-reflective research.

The turn toward self-inquiry was not a random occurrence. Outside of the research the youth and I were conducting, we spent much of our time surveying black liberatory theories. The youth were exposed to critical race theory, black radical theory, African-centered theory, and black feminism, through texts, film, and guest speakers who dealt in various traditions of Truth-telling. We discussed the overlaps and nuances within these theoretical lenses. One of the assignments the youth were asked to complete was a tracing of their own theoretical lens, for which they were asked to name and sketch a basic framework. It is not coincidental that they took this curricular framework around self-actualization and applied it to their research.

The youths' responses to my questions about why they decided to shift the focus of their inquiry highlighted the development of an "oppositional worldview" that hooks (1990) describes as necessary for moving toward self-determination, starting with an understanding of *ourselves* as part of a social group. The youths' participation in the research collective took on a dialectical nature as they were pushed to collaborate through yPAR, but also maintained competing ideas of what their work should entail. Both the limitations to collaboration and its realization, at times, seemed to have contributed to the reflexive turn in the youths' research process.

This participatory dialectic among the youth mirrors the contestation between dominant, negative societal narratives of blackness and their emergent critical consciousness that was being honed at NdCAD. Introspective inquiry, then, became another process through which the youth could try to reconcile intrapersonal and interpersonal crises based on incommensurable positions about race. Autumn and AJ's perceptions of each other, while limiting participatory interactions at times, provoked introspection among the group. Their dissonance became an internal source of knowledge production, in a sense using the discomfort of crisis to emerge from potential catastrophe. Autumn and AJ were never able to fully reconcile their tension, but each made a significant contribution to the research collective through different modes. One of Uhuru's products for disseminating their research was a small book called *Finding Our Lens* (NdCAD, 2012). Much of Autumn's work in the book was highly personal, dealing mostly with her identity as a multiracial youth coming to terms with societal messages regarding her blackness. One of Autumn's contributions was a poem, which she titled "An Ode to my Skin," celebrating her ancestral connection to people of African descent. Reflecting back to her confession at the beginning of the semester of "not wanting to hate herself" because of how others read her blackness, this was a significant personal outcome.

AJ focused more on structural issues in her contributions to the Uhuru Youth Scholars' text. In an essay on race she wrote:

> So racism is power, basically. All jobs should be equally fair to people but it's hard to prove someone didn't get a job because of racism. Is this how life is supposed to be? One big tangled mess of hatred? I think so 'cause the world doesn't know anything different because it's been around for so long. (NdCAD, 2013)

Autumn and AJ's contributions represent prevalent articulations of how blackness is constructed in their respective worlds; however, these articulations allowed for separation in how they spoke to the issues that were important to them. Autumn's personal identity and understanding of her own blackness was disconnected from AJ's concern about structural racism in hiring practices. As

jazz researchers they each were able to interpret their solos differently while exploring the prevalent theme. They were also able to effectively illustrate the combination of micro and macro factors that constitute racism both individually and institutionally, which is one of the central tenets of Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006).

As a critical jazz research collective, the established structures and bounds of traditional research logics were continually pushed in order to find newer, more innovative and inclusive spaces through which knowledge and theory could be developed. West (1996) synthesizes the relationship between jazz and crisis by constructing it as a transformational human disposition:

> I use the term "jazz"…for a mode of being in the world, an improvisational mode of protean, fluid and flexible dispositions toward reality, suspicious of either/or viewpoints, dogmatic pronouncements and supremacist ideologies. To be a jazz freedom fighter is to attempt to galvanize and energize world-weary people into forms of organization with accountable leadership that promotes critical exchange and broad reflection. (p. 147)

It is important to understand that this is not about being caught up in popular truths, rather attempting to understand the unpopular Truth. West's notion of "galvaniz[ing] world-weary peoples" challenges us to shift perspective in a way that aligns us with those who have been impacted the greatest by social inequality and taken for granted assumptions of hierarchy. If educators and researchers are to take West's call for "jazz freedom fighter[s]" seriously, it is incumbent upon us to embed jazz-like elements into our practices in order to push the established boundaries. When we understand crisis as an opportunity to reflect and grow collectively, it becomes its own end and provides a path toward better understanding the conditions that nurtured it. My research, my students' collective research, and my pedagogy had the potential to induce crisis as a generative theme across the components that shaped our situated environment. Crisis through dissonance became a disposition for learning about ourselves and, thus, the outside world.

Dissonance and Oppositional Worldview: Technologies of Breaking Away

The Uhuru Youth Scholars were guided by the pedagogical aspects of yPAR, and as crises emerged learning ensued. Much of the sociocultural literature regarding participation has significant explanatory power to describe how one becomes consciously and/or unconsciously socialized into a particular cultural community (Bourdieu, 1977; Rogoff, 2003). These cultural communities that sociocultural theorists depict are typically hegemonic in construction. For instance, Bourdieu's (1984) seminal text, *Distinction*, painstakingly documents how and why people seem to adhere to the social classes they were born into and how they come to accept their socially constructed cultural community as a natural occurrence. It is less common to see sociocultural analyses that specifically address the social, psychological, cognitive, and spiritual aspects of breaking away from naturalized cultural communities that maintain the status quo of unequal social relationships between people (Hilliard, 1995; Sandoval, 2000). The recognition and necessity of analyzing how cultural communities are not natural but constructed for the purpose of material resources is a necessary intervention in the sociocultural literature. This intervention in people's lives entails crisis by contesting the hegemony of the nature of culture, which became apparent in the experiences of the Uhuru Youth Scholars. Below I use an interview with Will to explore how his experience as a jazz researcher provoked him to recall the critical stance he once held, and begin to

reclaim an oppositional consciousness that searched for Truth outside of the constructs with which he was presented.

Sandoval (2000) outlines a "methodology" for developing an "oppositional worldview" (hooks, 1990), or what she calls "oppositional consciousness." She illustrates the "primary inner and outer technologies[3] that construct and enable the differential mode of social movement and consciousness" (p. 3). Using aspects of this methodology, I explore how crisis and participation became two vectors for moving toward an oppositional consciousness that aligns with black self-determination. Sandoval writes, "Such activity, perception, and behavior requires the development of a form of consciousness that is capable of tactically projecting any vertical, pyramidal, or 'deep' code onto a flat, horizontal, and superficial code" (p. 77). Using this framework in analyzing Will's interview, it becomes apparent that these multiple mappings help to illustrate his oppositional consciousness, which enables him to "ride on the dissonance."

In my final interview with Will, the openness he had toward assertions from our class, which competed with his own logic, began to make sense as he described his history of questioning.

> *Will:* This class kind of brought back a memory I had of—actually it's not just a memory, something that comes up and again and again and it's just, what is my history? Where—I know where we come from, but like, there's no way for the common person to just figure out, "Where exactly did I come from? Where do my ancestors, my main family, directly come from? And why did this happen?" I don't know, I was just—I can't think of the other questions right now, but I had a lot of them.
>
> *Brian:* It seems like questioning is a lot of what you do, right? I mean it seems like kind of part of who you are. You ask yourself a lot of questions so it just kind of fell into that pattern of questioning for you?
>
> *Will:* Yeah. And then another pattern formed where they just get laid to rest and then they just pop up like vaguely and it's just, "I know I had that question but…" Just too many piled up and then they got, I don't know, they blurred mentally.
>
> *Brian:* So what do you think were the major things that you did take away from this class, now that we're kinda getting towards the end of it?
>
> *Will:* I didn't know….Let me see, just trying to form this. I didn't know how many…. I didn't know that our people had built so much, had invented so much. I don't know. I didn't know that so much was… I didn't see as clearly how so much of that was being muddled over by all these other people's successes who… I mean, it seems like there's a social structure that's just ingrained and—that's probably what it is. And it's just, I don't know how to explain this. I have it in my head but I can't put it out.
>
> *Brian:* You're doing a good job I think.
>
> *Will:* It seems like it's just there and then all we're doing is just building off of that and it would be really hard to try and grow outside of that.
>
> *Brian:* It's hard to get outside of the structures?
>
> *Will:* Yeah. (Interview, 4/23/13)

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3. I do not work through each of Sandoval's "technologies" in this writing because they are quite extensive, and I have previously documented Will's experience connected to the first two technologies of "semiotics" and "deconstruction" (Lozenski & Ford, 2014).

This exchange between Will and I is illustrative of several of Sandoval's "technologies" for the development of oppositional consciousness. As Will began to construct a historical perspective of his intellectual development, it was apparent that his curiosity about his ancestral origins weighed heavily on his mind. His articulation of the connections he was making between his historical wonderings and his Uhuru Youth Scholars experience, combined with the recognition that there exists "a social structure that is ingrained," aligns with Sandoval's notion of meta-ideologizing.

Drawing from Barthes (1972), Sandoval defines the technology of meta-ideologizing as "the operation of appropriating dominant ideological forms, and using them whole in order to transform them" (p. 83). Meta-ideologizing goes beyond the internal consciousness-raising processes of "semiotic deconstruction," which entails the recognition of signs as existing in socially constructed semiotic systems. This deconstruction is a precursor to meta-ideologizing, which can be seen in Will's responses. The reflexiveness of Will's responses is quite similar to the process Sandoval describes for moving beyond the inner techniques of developing a critical eye to the extent that "[t]he practitioner feels the work of ideology on perception and consciousness, but then replays those moments in order to interrupt 'the turnstile of form and meaning' by focusing on each separately—thus interrupting the formation of identity itself" (p. 104). With regard to Truth-telling, this internal interruption, or dissonance, becomes a filter through which previously taken for granted ideas are interrogated.

Irreversible Methodology: The Groove's Cookin'

Will's experience, as well as that of Autumn and AJ, explicate the ways in which research became a process of learning through self-discovery. As a research facilitator and instructor I was able to act as a band-leader, providing the basic structure for our music. Oldfather and West (1994) write, "In jazz the original score is a 'bare bones' chord chart that provides just enough guidance for the musicians' collaboration" (p. 24). I composed our chart, but the collective made the song. Simultaneously, I was on stage performing as a jazz co-researcher and in the audience—absorbing—as an ethnographer. These vantage points allowed for clarity, at times, but also complexity as my roles began to collide in generative ways. The closing of ethnographic distance in my research enabled me to not only maintain the humanizing touch that Anzaldúa (1987) describes, but also to wrestle with my own responses to intra and interpersonal dissonances that emerged due to my own positionality. From a pedagogical sense, the youth and I embodied the "teacher-student" and "student-teacher" roles that Freire (1970) requires within a problem-posing framework. My research resulted in a hybridized methodology that I liken to an irreversible chemical reaction. Similar to the way a cake cannot return to its original components of flour, sugar, and eggs after being mixed and baked, the "original" components of my research were forever unrecognizable. Originally, I proposed engaging in a critical ethnographic study of youth conducting participatory action research. To add more complexity to this scenario, the context of the youth research would take place in a dual-credit course in which I was the instructor. Thus, the components of my research involved in this pseudo-chemical (social) reaction were critical ethnography, youth participatory action research, and critical pedagogy. However, I was no longer able to determine which aspects of my resulting methodology belonged to these original components. They reacted with each other to form an entirely new irreversible methodological substance.

One of the major transformations that occurred for me during this study was the idea that education and research can be, and in my work increasingly were, one and the same. Education

and research begin to enter into relationship with one another when teachers take up inquiry as a teaching and learning framework. Campano (2009) writes:

> A teacher who adopts an inquiry stance into practice is thus engaged in the infinitely complex and never-ending task of adjudicating between various categories and concepts…. These ideas are understood in relationship to the teacher's own ever-evolving conceptual understandings derived from classroom life, her or his singular relationships to students, and the local knowledge of the community. (p. 331)

Campano is focused on teachers "adjudicating between various categories and concepts" with regard to their students and the ecology of the educational environment. However, as educators begin to adopt inquiry as a pedagogical stance, the logical progression is to then inculcate their students with a similar disposition with regard to learning. It would not make sense for educators to recognize the richness and depth that inquiry extends to their own learning and practice for the purpose of working with youth in narrow educational paradigms that seek simple technical acquisitions of process and content knowledge.

Freire (1982) describes this shift in research as situating the teacher to take up research as pedagogy:

> Instead of taking the people here as the object of my research, I must try, on the contrary, to have the people dialogically involved also as subjects, as researchers with me. If I am interested in knowing the people's ways of thinking, and levels of perception, then the people have to think about their thinking, and not be only the objects of my thinking. This method of investigation…is at the same time a learning process…Thus, in doing research, I am educating and being educated with the people. (p. 30)

Freire would also concur that it is not just about "doing research." There are methodological considerations to how this research process is approached: "The qualitative researcher may take on multiple and gendered images: scientists, naturalist, field-worker, journalist, social critic, artist, performer, *jazz musician*, filmmaker, quilt maker, essayist" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 5). Pedagogy is embedded among these multiple identities in qualitative research.

I was obviously not the first person to do this work or experience this dilemma of methodology, as I follow the footprints of scholars like Cahill (2006), Kinloch, (2010), Morrell (2004), Yang, (2009), and others. However, given the inherent contextualized unpredictability of yPAR, my experience within this research was unique, and thus ripe for analysis and interpretation. Additionally, most critical ethnographic research with youth engaged in yPAR foregrounds the experience of the youth, while paying less attention to the experience of the researcher/pedagogue. And while we should be thinking deeply about the social, political, and cultural experiences of youth, as I do in much of this analysis, there are no easy lines of delineation between youth and adults with regard to these sociocultural and political factors.

For instance, as an ethnographer, one of my primary methods for generating data was conducting qualitative interviews with my students. On the surface this was a simple ethnographic method for data generation; however, part of our curriculum focused on designing and conducting research. Thus my interview became an example of a method of data generation that my students could potentially use in their own research. The interview was, then, simultaneously an ethnographic method (Madison, 2005), a social practice (Talmy, 2010), and a pedagogical practice of

scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Take, for instance, this exchange between Nathaniel and me during an interview regarding what he took away from the course:

> *Brian:* So [this class] hasn't taught you that much in terms of facts and history, that kind of stuff? Say more about that. So you say it hasn't taught you that much, but you gained from it.
> *Nathaniel:* I probably say I gained a little bit more than facts and history, but then the way I see, sort of I can see how I see now. You understand what I'm saying?
> *Brian:* Mm-hmm.
> *Nathaniel:* So I can put a third person in the way I view things, in a way.
> *Brian:* Yep. So you, okay. Does that have to do with the lens thing?
> *Nathaniel:* Yeah.
> *Brian:* So you can actually see the way your lens is shaped?
> *Nathaniel:* Mm-hmm. Shaped.
> *Brian:* Okay. That makes sense.
> *Nathaniel:* People won't understand this when they listen to this. You know this, right?
> *Brian:* Well, I'll understand it. I'm the only one that's going listen to it.
> *Nathaniel:* Mm-hmm.
> *Brian: [Laughter]* Seriously, no, I don't—
> *Nathaniel:* But your teachers.[4]
> *Brian:* No, no, no. I don't—this is my own [study]. So the only thing that [everybody] will listen to is—or they won't listen to anything. They'll read what I write. And what I write I'll share with you before I give it to them. So to make sure that you agree with what I'm saying.
> *Nathaniel:* Alright.
> *Brian:* Or you agree with how I'm interpreting stuff. So not necessarily that you agree with every single point that I make, but you say "that you're not misrepresenting me."
> *Nathaniel:* And if you are—
> *Brian:* Misrepresenting you?
> *Nathaniel:* Yeah. *[Laughter]*
> *Brian:* Well, that's why I would check in, because I don't want to misrepresent you. My goal is not to misrepresent you.
> *Nathaniel:* Alright.

Nathaniel's suggestion that other people will not understand what he is saying indicates that he was considering this interview from a perspective beyond simply being the interviewee. As someone who has engaged in qualitative research practices, Nathaniel recognized that there was a broader purpose to analyzing and disseminating what he was saying in the interview. Further, a pedagogical moment arose when we began to discuss the ethics of interviewing, representation, and member checking—all of which were topics during our course. This brief example demonstrates the methodological merging of critical ethnography, yPAR, and critical pedagogy, through the practice of developing a typical research method. To go a step further, if we understand an interview as a co-construction of knowledge (Madison, 2005), or a social practice (Talmy, 2010),

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4. I was a doctoral student at the time of this study, which I shared with the Uhuru Youth Scholars.

my students and I were engaged in a dialogic process that had implications for how they understood their situated environment as students, researchers, and research participant/subjects, while I continued to shape my identity as a researcher/subject, teacher, and co-researcher.

The jazz metaphor becomes particularly useful in this instance as multiple roles and identities came into contact. Oldfather and West (1994) write,

> Jazz is adaptive and is shaped by the participants. Their improvisations are collaborative and interdependent; the quality of the music depends on each musician's hearing, responding to, and appreciating the performances of the other players. The spotlight moves back and forth between the ensemble and soloists—as they alternate taking the lead or providing backup. (p. 22)

In this sense, jazz, like critical qualitative research, is a dialogic process where the interlocutors exchange the power to shape meaning making. The irreversible chemical reaction of methodologies took time to occur. There were moments when dialogic pedagogy took the lead and critical ethnography played back-up, and other times when yPAR foregrounded itself in unison with ethnography. These aspects of control remained constantly in tension, providing dissonance and possibility. On a micro level the metaphor of the irreversible reaction represents only my roles as the author of this analysis and the band leader; yet on a macro level, I am but one of the players in the band and each of the youth could have authored their own analysis exploring their own shifting roles within our work.

Tension: The (re)Birth of the Cool

In the Uhuru Youth Scholars program, the catalytic forces that produced an inevitable metamorphosis of identity in my students and me remained relatively stable as methodology, yet the reaction was dramatic and, in some instances, generatively violent within the tension-filled production of new paradigms, conflicts, and crises. The defining notion of this journey through methodology is one of democracy in all of its complexity. It is the about the attempt to reconcile the individual with the collective—the "I" with the "we." West (1996) describes the interplay between "I" and "we," related to the metaphor of jazz and democracy:

> The interplay of individuality and unity is not one of uniformity and unanimity imposed from above, but rather of conflict among diverse groupings that reach a dynamic consensus subject to questioning and criticism. As with a soloist in a jazz quartet, quintet or band, individuality is promoted in order to sustain and increase the *creative* tension within the group—tension that yields higher levels of performance to achieve the aim of the collective project. (p. 147)

As West explains, the "we" needs the "I" in order to mobilize conflict, which is the fuel that grows the collective. This necessary conflict can be thought of in terms of crisis (Kumashiro, 2002), which entails both intrapersonal and interpersonal moments of disjuncture. Without the tensions of crisis, stagnation normalizes, disrupting the movement of the collective. Yet crisis can also happen at an intergroup level, impacting the entire collective. In these instances, it is the clarity of vision among the "we" that can carry individuals through the chaos. The educational psychologist and Egyptologist Asa Hilliard, III (1995) wrote, "Without a sense of 'we' collective action is nearly

impossible" (p. 131). Times of intergroup crisis necessitate collective action. Notice that West, even as he juxtaposes individuality and unity, ultimately names the end goal as "achiev[ing] the aim of the collective project." In this case, the "I" cannot solely formulate the vision. It cannot set the conditions that dictate action. The "I" can only operate inside of the "we," yet the "we" will perish without the "I."

While most studies about yPAR focus on the specific research conducted by the youth themselves, I have decided to take a different approach. Rather than foregrounding the research design, methods, and outcomes the youth produced during the year, the sociocultural approach in this analysis highlights the aspects of social practice that are often beneath the surface of conscious thought and, thus, unspoken. In writing about the politics of radical black subjectivity, bell hooks (1990) quotes Paulo Freire, saying, "We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order to later be-come subjects" (Freire as cited in hooks, 1990, p. 15). This statement goes to the heart of this study, describing the struggles of people of African descent in the U.S. for a self-determined sys-tem of education. If we are to enter into the struggle at all, we cannot enter it through the lens of those who have historically sought and continue to situate black youth as *objects* to be educated. Black youth, adults, families, and communities must enter the struggle as subjects, by shaping and creating our own possibilities for what education can become.

hooks (1990) rhetorically questions how we go about this process. She writes, "How do we create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also opposes dehumanization but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualization?" (p. 15). For hooks the answer lies in the development of a critical disposition that goes beyond various manifestations of resistance and "emerges as one comes to understand how structures of domination work in one's own life…as one invents new, alternative habits of being, and resists from that marginal space of difference inwardly defined" (p. 15). Like Morrell (2004) and Kinloch (2010), hooks describes the development of a critical disposition as an introspective process: one that emerges in each distinct individual.

However, yPAR is not an individual endeavor. It consists of individuals working in col-laboration to collectively impact an issue. The jazz ensemble is constituted by the sum of its parts, but individually each musician must balance his or her own thoughts, ideas, and histories with that of the others. This is why participation is such a crucial aspect of the work of both jazz music and yPAR. Possibilities can only emerge as the ensemble can envision them, regardless of what the individual sees. The individual can make efforts to push the ensemble in new directions, or toward new possibilities through soloing, but cannot go there alone. Thus, much like a critical disposition, youth engaged in yPAR are pushed to develop a participatory subjectivity, which can be more challenging than understanding the "structures of domination" in our lives.

I began this study contemplating how I would conduct a critical ethnographic study of a course I was teaching with youth doing participatory action research. Along the way, I came to several counterintuitive realizations. From seeing the congruence of research and education to coming to understand crisis as a generative and necessary place for research, I have been trans-formed through this work. As I attempt to situate myself methodologically, perhaps Lather's (2007) suggestion of "telling stories that situate researchers not so much as experts 'saying what things mean' in terms of 'data'…[but] as witness giving testimony to the lives of others" (p. 41) is a wise consideration. Still, I think this statement makes too much of a delineation between my-self as a "researcher" and the youth I spent a year with as the "participants." Yes, I am telling this story, but as Brother Gevonee Ford once told me, I am not speaking with one voice. As I reflect

on the journey these youth and I took through multiple methodological pathways the following passage from the Yoruban spiritual text, the *Odu Ifa*, as cited by Karenga (2006), speaks to me:

> *Let us not engage the world hurriedly.*
> *Let us not grasp the rope of wealth impatiently.*
> *That which should be treated in a mature manner,*
> *Let us not deal with it in a state of uncontrolled passion.*
> *When we arrive at a cool place,*
> *Let us rest fully.*
> *Let us give continuous attention to the future.*
> *Let us give deep consideration to the consequences of things.*
> *And this, because of our eventual passing.*
> —Yoruban Odu Ifa (1:1)

My time with these young people was a "cool place" to arrive, rest fully, and give deep consideration to the consequences of things. In many ways jazz music is about arriving at cool places and reflecting upon what we can see now that we may have previously missed. The learning is in the journey. The dissonance is the road. In attempting to define what this means for critical research, I believe it calls us to know that the catastrophic is the start rather than the end.

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Reconciling the Knowledge of Scholars & Practitioners: An Extended Case Analysis of the Role of Theory in Student Affairs

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Abstract

This paper utilizes a critical post-pragmatist epistemological lens in tandem with an extended case analysis to explore how student affairs professionals process truth claims related to student experience. Findings from the study, which include the limited usage of formal theory and the iterative reconstruction of informal theory, are used to demonstrate the utility of critical, theory-engaged methodology in educational research. Implications for future research and methodological decision-making are offered.

Critical scholars of education hold that knowledge cannot be neutral. Truth claims always have normative implications, and those normative implications are always associated with larger economic, political, and cultural forces. Critical scholars of education have systematically demonstrated far-ranging and deleterious effects on students and teachers at all levels of the educational pipeline; however, no systematic study of how higher education professionals in non-faculty roles experience the politics of knowledge construction has yet been conducted. In an attempt to rectify this issue, this paper reports the results of compressed ethnography focused on the theory usage of student affairs professionals (hereafter: practitioners)—specifically academic advisors and residence life coordinators—within higher education. It then uses these empirical findings as a catalyst to explore the potential for critical, theory-engaged methodologies in educational research.

The student affairs profession is a particularly revealing subject for this sort of undertaking. From the date of its founding, the student affairs profession has consistently been asked to justify the theoretical grounding for its work. This work is typically conducted in a prescriptive, ostensive fashion wherein leading experts designate some forms of knowledge as legitimate and others as illegitimate (e.g., Evans & Guido, 2012). Most often, the answer has been that knowledge produced according to standard social scientific conventions is legitimate while all other knowledge is not. As Reason and Kimball (2012) have noted, however, practitioners frequently encounter situations that go beyond the bounds of their training and require the use of post-formal reasoning, which has led some (e.g., Love, 2012) to conclude that only highly localized knowledge is likely to be useful. As a result, studies of the student affairs profession are enhanced through careful attention to and application of theory-engaged methodologies.

The relative legitimacy or illegitimacy of disparate knowledge bases also invites a critical approach. A critical approach sheds light on the politics of knowledge production by focusing on

what truth claims practitioners actually value in practice and how those truth claims were produced. To that end, I utilize a critical post-pragmatist epistemology (CPPE; Rorty, 1990; 1999) as the interpretive lens with which to understand findings arising from an extended case analysis (ECA: Burawoy, 1991; 1998). Both approaches reframe well-established modes of inquiry—American pragmatism and ethnography respectively—through the lens of critical theory. In this paper, I demonstrate the utility of both CPPE and ECA using empirical results originating from a study that addressed the following research question: What truth claims do practitioners employ in constructing their understanding of student experience?

The empirical results emerging from this work serve to highlight the potential for the application of critical, theory-engaged methodologies in educational research. Specifically, CPPE served as a useful lens for examining the production, use, and revision of truth claims by practitioners while ECA allowed for the testing of specific predictions emerging from existing theoretical knowledge—in this case, four predictions derived from Reason and Kimball's (2012) theory-to-practice model. Given the importance of both CPPE and ECA to the overall aims of this paper, I begin by describing both. During the discussion of ECA, I also provide a brief overview of the design and methods of the study described throughout the remainder of the paper. I then review relevant literature related to theory use in student affairs. This discussion of literature serves to demonstrate how specific, testable theoretical predictions are created and then function within the methodological framework provide by ECA. Following this discussion of theory and literature, I then share limited findings from my study of practitioners. These findings highlight the way that theory is utilized as well as its connection to practice and thereby demonstrate the utility of both CPPE and ECA as part of a critical theory-engaged methodology in educational research.

Critical Post-Pragmatist Epistemology

CPPE begins from the assumption that the experience and understanding of individuals are inseparable (James, 1907/1981; 1909/1978). According to the pragmatic conceptualization of reality, the most fundamental impulse for people is to produce narratives that account for their experiences. Each day, experiences bring new ideas into conflict with existing narratives. These new ideas must then be accepted as truth and assimilated into the way the world is understood, deconstructed into constitutive elements in order to reconstruct present understandings, or rejected in favor of past understanding. Consequently, for pragmatists, knowledge is constantly in flux; as new truth replaces old, change is the only guarantee.

As the anchor for a philosophy of social science, pragmatism's focus on the processural interactions of experience, interpretation, and assimilation account for disciplinary decisions about what constitutes legitimate knowledge. Kuhn (1962/1996) demonstrates that scientific knowledge is paradigmatic—that is, the result of a set of shared conventions regarding problem selection and techniques—and that often judgments of truth are made based more on consistency with that paradigm than on coherence to empirical observations. However, truth claims do evolve over time, and philosophers of science can impose a retrospective judgment of movement toward some referent. This movement can be accounted for only by treating the truth claims themselves—not the normative conventions of science—as paradigmatic (Fine, 1996).

The rules of science as a form of paradigm recede further when examining the actual behavior of scientists, which is often unscientific (Feyerabend, 1975/2010); instead of being seen as objective, science becomes very human. Given its focus on other human beings, social science encounters this issue even more acutely. Experiencing what Giddens (1984) has called the "double

hermeneutic," social scientists study processes in which they themselves are participants and produce results that have the potential to alter the processes they study. As a result, social scientific knowledge and methods are produced in a state of praxis in which the researcher, research subjects, methods, and findings interact in myriad ways. Building on this observation, a critical philosophy of social science highlights the extent to which this field of praxis is inseparable from the actual interpretive judgments of social scientists (e.g., Bourdieu, 1971/1977; Habermas, 1963/1973). Post-pragmatists take this understanding of the social sciences to its logical conclusion—suggesting that the social sciences have erroneously followed the example of the natural sciences believing them to be a road to objectivity (Rorty, 1990). For post-pragmatists, however, not only can that objectivity never exist, but its pursuit also leads to negative consequences (Rorty, 1999). All truth is highly contextual, and only problems of practical significance are worth pursuing (Rorty & Engel, 2007). For Rorty (1999), this emphasis on actual human impact is also consistent with a larger, critical agenda for social change.

As an epistemological lens for the study of the theory use of practitioners, CPPE offers several noteworthy advantages. First, by destabilizing the relationship between truth claims and objectivity, CPPE makes space for the multiple forms of theory utilized in the student affairs profession. It further makes no normative judgment regarding the relative values of each—allowing a methodological sensitivity to the utility of that knowledge use. Second, given this focus on utility, CPPE is sensitive to the relationship between individuals, environments, and the research process. It therefore offers several different hermeneutic relationships (individual-environment, individual-research process, and environment-research process) that can help to surface findings. Finally, in rejecting the belief in objective truth, CPPE is suitable for use with a research design intended to produce scholarly knowledge in atypical ways, as is the case with a research design based on ECA.

Extended Case Analysis as Research Design

The study reported in this article employed ECA as proposed by Burawoy (1991; 1998; 2009) and modified by Eliasoph and Lichterman (1999). As conceptualized by Burawoy (1998), ECA is a mechanism for refining formal theories. Beginning with an existing theory base, ECA compares what existing theory would predict to empirical data derived from a detailed study of one or more cases. Observations that are unexplained by existing theories become the basis for proposed modifications to those theories. Importantly, Burawoy (1998) does not claim that these modifications are "valid" or "true" according to the conventions of social science. Instead, they represent a composite form of theory that accounts for both scholarly and practical knowledge that emerges from, but exists in parallel with, social scientific knowledge until such time as future research can resolve the conflict. In short, discrepant observations surfaced by the ECA are intended to structure future research and problematize existing theories rather than to be treated as the empirical truth. As a result, ECA is capable of resituating the epistemological and methodological foundation for social science research. To that end, Burawoy (2009) notes:

> …the extended case method [is] defined by its four extensions: the extension of observer into the lives of participants under study, the extension of observations over time and space; the extension from microprocesses to macroforces; and, finally, and most important, the extension of theory. Each extension involves a dialogue: between participant and observer, between successive events in the field, between micro and macro, and between successive

reconstructions of theory. These dialogues orbit around each other, each in the gravitation field of the others. (p. xv)

This fundamentally dialogic understanding of research means that ECA views knowledge as a social production; sees the hermeneutic function of knowledge as its applied function; and treats praxis as inherently implicated in the research itself. Consequently, theories constructed in this way can bridge the gap between informal (Love, 2012) and formal theory (Evans & Guido, 2012). Insights can then be taken into account in future empirical and theoretical work.

As stated by Burawoy (1991), ECA "seeks generalization through reconstructing existing generalizations, that is, the reconstruction of existing theory" (p. 279). Researchers employing ECA begin by surveying existing theoretical descriptions of the phenomena they plan to observe. They then compare the forecast provided by existing theory to data derived from sustained engagement with relevant observations. Described in greater detail below, the study reported in this paper responds to theoretical predictions generated by Reason and Kimball (2012) in a model of theory-to-practice conversions in student affairs.

By convention, ECA relies on ethnography as an overall framework for its research since it is focused on the intersection of individual lives and social structures (Burawoy, 2009). Further, the naturalism and holism incumbent in ethnographic approaches minimizes the potential that theoretical predictions might unduly shape the perceptions of the researcher by allowing discrepancies between the theoretical and the real to emerge. While ECA has most often been used to study theories of the middle range—accounting for social institutions like factories and school—Eliasoph and Lichterman (1999) argue that ECA can also be employed to focus on cultural processes and individuals. In the study described in this paper, having a specific focus on how practitioners make meaning of disparate truth claims about student experience required a more person-focused set of methods than ECA typically entails. As such, the study is best thought of as an interview study residing within the overall framework of a compressed ethnography (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). These divergences from the normative application of the ECA serve to further highlight the role of researcher's reflexivity in critical, theory-engaged methodologies.

Participants

This study utilizes a comparative multi-case design, which Burawoy (2009) suggests is appropriate when looking for divergences in theoretical utility across settings. Participants were drawn from the staff of Central University, which enrolls more than 25,000 undergraduate students. Student affairs work at Central University is highly decentralized: departments, colleges, and the central administration share responsibility for the delivery of student services. Consequently, practitioners working in different functional areas under different supervisory structures might have divergent training and experiences. To maximize the potential for comparison, I selected staff from residence life and academic advising—two student affairs units with widely divergent portfolios of work.

At Central University, residence life operations are organized into several "areas" that serve targeted student populations. In the Commons, the area from which I recruited participants, six full-time practitioners worked with a large support staff to provide housing to approximately 4,000 sophomores or juniors. I employed a convenience sampling strategy wherein potential participants contacted me following a neutral announcement from their supervisor. Five practitioners

in residence life responded to this announcement. After follow-up conversations to explain research design, three practitioners (Hughes, Alice, and Barbara) confirmed their willingness to participate.

Academic advising operations at Central University are operated by each academic administrative unit. The School of Management and Information Technology, the site where I conducted my research, has an enrollment of approximately 5,000 students and employs 15 full-time academic advisors. Again, utilizing a convenience sample, I made a presentation to the advising staff and asked interested individuals to contact me to express an interest in participating. Six advisors (Lisa, Jean, Marie, Linda, Brenda, and Tom) chose to participate.

By recruiting participants from a college's office of academic advising and the central student affairs division's residence life office program, I created the potential for controlled comparison (Maxwell, 2005). For the purpose of analysis, I treated each individual practitioner included in this study as a unique case while aggregating cases based in similar contexts (i.e. advising cases and residence life cases) as part of the same analytic units. In this regard, my study differs from a standard application of ECA in terms of its scope—providing findings both about individuals and the larger theory base in question (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 1999).

Data & Methods

As noted above, this study incorporated an interview study into the overall framework of a compressed ethnography. At the residence life office, I conducted approximately 40 hours of participant observation—including time spent shadowing Hughes, Alice, and Barbara; observations of office operations; and general observations of The Commons. Roughly 55 hours of participant observation research were also conducted in the academic advising office. This data collection included shadowing most of the participating advisors; observations of office operations; and general observations of the School of Management and Information Technology. I documented all participant observation utilizing both informal jottings (which included notes intended to provoke my recollection of events and ideas) and more formal fieldnotes (which included reflexive observations, notes on emergent themes, and more fully elaborated narrative descriptions). Document analysis supplemented my direct observation and was utilized to produce a greater understanding of context (Smith, 2006).

Each participant also took part in two interviews. Interviews averaged 75-90 minutes. Initial observations were recorded utilizing hand-written notes and a digital audio recorder. Based on participant observation and document analysis, initial topical codes were produced for the field notes and used to refine a loosely-structured protocol for the first interviews. The first interview included questions related to participant backgrounds; theory use; understanding of student experience; definition of learning and development; and their professional role. The second interview was utilized as a form of member-checking and to test understandings developed from both observation and the initial interview. The second interview included questions related to scenarios that had been observed by or related to the researcher during data collection (e.g. a student who was not adjusting socially; a student who was over-committed; a student who was in the "wrong" major; and a student moving through a conduct or judicial process); preliminary findings; and the social context of their work. In the second interviews, participants were also asked to respond to an emergent model of student learning and development that was based on first interview responses.

Analytic Strategy

All coding and analysis was completed in Atlas.ti. As data were collected, an abductive approach to analysis was employed by—holding cases and theories up against one another to see how theories might be reconstructed to take into account the lessons of practice (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Burawoy, 1991). Data was frequently and continually reexamined and recoded through the lens of new findings. A cut-and-sort coding method was used to associate excerpts of interviews or field notes with an open or in vivo code and then to determine the extent to which similar meaning was inscribed elsewhere in the study (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Similar open and in vivo codes were grouped once again to produce an emergent code defined by the range of initial codes. Related emergent codes were clustered into code "families" that included similar, divergent, and related meanings. Based upon these code families, the themes described in the "Findings" section were created.

While it is relatively common to suggest that key themes emerge from the data (Murchison, 2010), it is not an accurate description of how the ECA works: by design, the researcher's perspective and the conceptual framework shaped the final analysis as suggested by Burawoy (1998). Throughout the analysis process, I compared emergent codes, code families, and themes to the Reason and Kimball (2012) model and to other relevant literature as appropriate. In doing so, I sought both coherence with and divergence from existing theory. These observations then informed both my future analysis and my re-analysis of previously coded work. While to some extent intrinsic to ECA, this iterative, reflexive process also stems from the use of a CPPE. Its insistence on utility rather than truth as the central concern of knowledge production means that CPPE is capable of holding open tensions between expectation and observation during data collection while also being well-suited for reconciling those contradictions during analysis.

Reflexivity

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. This poses a series of interpretive challenges for both the researcher and the reader. As such, I maintained a practice of writing regular reflexive memos about my own behavior and thinking throughout the data collection and analysis process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). I also utilized the second interview to share my preliminary findings with participants; asked them to comment on the sections of my analysis that they had most informed; and shared an emergent model with them—again asking for comments. In this way, I attempted to create "common ground" with participants. I also employed triangulation— utilizing multiple data collection techniques— and peer debriefing in order to enhance further the trustworthiness of my research results.

In order to facilitate the creation of "common ground" with readers of this research, I have tried to be as explicit as possible—given the space constraints posed by the medium—about the design choices that I have made. Additionally, through the analysis section, I provide extended descriptions and excerpts of the data upon which various analyses are based (Geertz, 1973). Further, I remind the reader that I not making a traditional claim of validity or generalizability as is now common in case study research (George & Bennett, 2005; Yin, 2008). Instead, as with Burawoy (2009), I believe that the research findings discussed subsequently represent only the beginning of a scholarly and practical conversation wherein meaning will be inscribed, contested, and reinscribed. Theoretical reconstructions produced via ECA are intended to structure future research. Until that time, however, they exist in an epistemological space uncommon in social

science: they are useful but not true. They are useful to the extent that they can serve to structure both scholarly and practical action, but they do not conform to the norms of social scientific knowledge production. Simultaneously, the theories that were subject to reconstruction remain true according to the norms of social science—even while they may already have been falsified in a practical context and thereby limited in utility. Given the temporary incommensurability of the theories refined through ECA and the theoretical reconstruction produced by ECA, a CPPE helps reconcile the multiply signified truth claims inherent in critical, theory-engaged research that itself examines the nature of theory.

Truth Claims in Student Affairs Practice

Both CPPE and ECA serve to highlight that there can be multiple, competing truth claims within a discourse of scholarly or practical significance. As highlighted in the discussion of CPPE, these problems can be particularly pronounced when the scholarly or practical problems under discussion are human-focused (Giddens, 1984). ECA provides a means to identify but not fully reconcile these divergences. In point of fact, these divergences are remarkably difficult to resolve. In the case of student affairs practice, they have heretofore proven to be irreducible: higher education researchers have long-lamented the problematic interface between scholarship and practice, but to date, there has been limited progress in resolving the separation. For example, Keller (1998) notes that scholarship is often of limited scope and utility. In a survey of higher education administrators, Kezar (2000) found that many held a similar view—noting that practitioners were more likely to utilize research that: 1) arose from questions that were proposed by other practitioners, 2) directly addressed issues of practice; and 3) utilized ideas and research techniques that were accessible to them. Kezar (2000) therefore concludes that an engaged, scholarly praxis wherein scholars and practitioners collaborate in the selection and execution of research is needed. To further understand what an engaged, scholarly praxis might look like, I next provide a description of several different types of theories that operate within student affairs, describe the practical significance of the divergences between these theories, and then discuss a synthetic model for reducing the differences between them.

Formal, Informal, and Implicit Theory

An engaged, scholarly praxis is also the crux of Parker's (1977) distinction between "formal" and "informal" theory. Formal theory accords with the scholarly understanding of theory development described above. It is produced and validated primarily through rigorous social science methods. Relevant research questions are seen as arising principally from the logically continuous body of scholarship that preceded a given study (Kuhn, 1962/1996). Such a theory is designed principally to have predictive power; it is held to be true until such time as it might be demonstrated false or another theory is shown to be more predictive (Popper 1959/2002). In contrast, informal theory emerges directly from human experience (James, 1907/1981; 1909/1978). Formal theories often contribute to informal theory development but so too do interactions with students; personal values, beliefs, and assumptions; and an understanding of relevant institutional factors. Thus, informal theories are far more eclectic than formal theories; since they are intended to serve as heuristic devices, they are evaluated primarily on their utility and flexibility.

As Bensimon (2007) notes, however, Parker's (1977) separation of truth claims into formal and informal theory obscures the potentially negative implications of the gap between scholarship

and practice. Proposing the term "implicit theory" to describe uncritical acceptance of assumptions about student experience, Bensimon (2007) suggests practitioners may be unaware of the truth claims that they have internalized. Thus, Bensimon (2007) argues that scholars have an ongoing obligation to attend both to the implications of their work for practice and to practitioners. A lack of this sort of attention leads to the creation of implicit theories, which are based on casual assumptions about student behavior rather than critical consideration of scholarly knowledge. As a result, Bensimon (2007) suggests the need both for a careful examination of implicit theory and for a formal theory that is more practical.

This seeming incommensurability of implicit and informal theory relative to formal theory earlier leads Bloland, Stamatakos, and Rogers (1994) to dismiss most student affairs research as meaningless and argue that such studies did more harm than good. Though never the dominant point of view among scholars, theory-to-practice conversions have been increasingly problematized over time (see Reason & Kimball, 2012). In a recent synthesis of these views, Love (2012) holds that most theories of student development do not conform to standard social science definitions of theory and further suggests that theoretical knowledge of student experience would not prove particularly helpful even if it did exist. The focus of student affairs work, Love (2012) argues, is more appropriately the individual student or small groups of student. At this level of application, student development scholars have long held that formal theory breaks down (Parker, 1977; Bloland et al., 1994). Instead, Love (2012) suggests that practitioners need ways to integrate their understandings of student experience with information provided by a variety of sources—including scholarly literature that suggests important "guiding concepts" (Reason & Kimball, 2012). While these guiding concepts might be based on something called theory, Love (2012) suggests that contextualizing them in practice strips them of any pretension to universality—a key part of the definition of formal theory.

Writing in response to Love (2012), Evans and Guido (2012) suggest that practice is inevitably informed by theory whether so labelled or not: the issue is how formal an approach to theory we ought to adopt. Advocating for a highly formalized approach, Evans and Guido (2012) hold that the use of informal theoretical approach advocated by Love (2012) is likely to introduce untested and potentially problematic assumptions. In this way, they suggest that informal theory is impossible to distinguish from Bensimon's (2007) implicit theory. They suggest instead that it is only via the aspiration to formal theory, even if executed in imperfect ways, which practitioners can safeguard against this sort of error.

The Reason and Kimball (2012) Model

Though not a part of the exchange between Love (2012) and Evans and Guido (2012), Reason and Kimball (2012) responded to the issues raised by both pieces. Finding a middle ground between the two positions, Reason and Kimball (2012) argue that while theory application may be problematic at present—as suggested by Love (2012)—its utility can be greatly enhanced through the use of a structured process designed to situate formal theory within an institutional context, produce informal theories based on both formal theories and that context, and then create strategies for practice. Their model can thus also be seen as a response to Evans and Guido's (2012) call for a direct connection between theory and practice. As such, this study thus utilizes an ECA to explore these varied definitions of theory through the synthetic lens offered by Reason and Kimball (2012).

The Reason and Kimball (2012) model holds that there are four elements in a theory-to-practice process: formal theory, institutional context, informal theory, and practice. Building in

two feedback loops, they also suggest that their theory-to-practice model is designed to be self-correcting—thereby promoting greater alignment between theory and practice. Their works builds on many prior attempts to model theory-to-practice conversions in both student affairs (e.g., Rodgers & Widdick, 1980; Stage, 1994; Stage & Dannells, 2000) and the human sciences more generally (e.g., Argyris & Schon, 1974; Morrill, Oetting, & Hurst, 1974).

The Reason and Kimball (2012) model begins from the assumption that practitioners require a foundation in the most important historical and contemporary theories of student development. This broad base of knowledge enables practitioners to select appropriate theoretical approaches based upon a variety of contexts—including the level of desired intervention and the institutional context. The institutional context, though missing from many models of theory-to-practice, provides an important lens through which formal theories are assessed and adapted. Defining the institutional context quite broadly—and thereby including standard institutional characteristics like Carnegie Class and admissions selectivity as well as the overall understanding of student experience held by the campus community—Reason and Kimball (2012) argue that practice is not a values-neutral activity and is consequently foregrounded by an institution-specific understanding of student development goals. They argue that, at the level of institutional context, practitioners ought to consider: the socio-demographic characteristics of students, the educational objectives of the college, the value commitments they hold, and the extent to which the above align.

At the informal theory stage, Reason and Kimball (2012) hold that practitioners construct the understanding of student experience they "use in their everyday practice" (Reason & Kimball, 2012, p. 18). As they define them, informal theories are "produced based upon the confluence of formal theories, institutional context, and the individual student affairs practitioner's positionality" and are the precursor to practice (Reason & Kimball, 2012, p. 18), which they describe as "the point at which formal and informal theories are translated into specific, concrete behavior with students." Reason and Kimball (2012) also incorporate two feedback loops designed to account for changes in understanding over time. Kimball and Ryder (2014) and Ryder and Kimball (2015) respectively have described the feedback loops as reflexivity and assessment.

As a conceptual framework, the Reason and Kimball (2012) model offers four theoretical predictions useful to the goal of better understanding how practitioners evaluate truth claims: 1) practitioners will use formal theory; 2) practitioners will create contextualized knowledge claims; 3) those contextualized knowledge claims will vary from person-to-person; and 4) there will be variation in both the use of formal theory and contextualized knowledge claims over time as practitioners seek to refine their understanding

Findings

Findings from this study are presented in three themes: 1) use of formal theory; 2) informal theory and contextual truth claims; and 3) uncertain knowledge. The first theme addresses the prediction that "practitioners will use formal theory," which was derived from Reason and Kimball (2012). The second theme addresses the remaining three predictions. The final theme represents an emergent finding concerning the discomfort some participants experienced when asked to share their understanding of student experience. As a result, it draws attention to the consequences of the current way knowledge is produced in student affairs.

Use of Formal Theory

Participants' narratives revealed their complicated relationships with formal theories. At one extreme was a group who either eschewed direct use of theoretical approaches altogether or argued that theoretical bases drawn from other disciplines had greater utility for their work. For example, despite the fact that her graduate training and professional experience had offered her broad exposure to both student learning and development theories, Linda stated when asked about student learning and development theory: "I don't consciously think about those." She did admit, however, that they might function in some background capacity. Alice, who had also received excellent graduate preparation in student learning and development theory, had the strongest negative reaction. In her words:

> I don't think this is a field that necessarily requires it. I think a lot of what we teach used to be called common sense and listening to your elders…I come from a really big family, and I think a lot of my perspectives and my values are really rooted in that. When you have [a large] family, there's always somebody not happy with the decision, and somebody's not getting their way. You really have to know how to communicate and so those are all things that I felt like I had before I went to grad school, before I learned student development theory and stuff like that. Some development theory I think is a load of horseshit, and they just need to stop.

Marie found slightly more use for formal theories, but argued for an eclectic approach that incorporated her experience in career counseling. In talking about theory, she also moved seamlessly between different literature and theory bases. Likewise, Jean traced her thinking about how best to manage developmental processes to prior experience managing recovery communities. In effect, both Marie and Jean utilized their academic and professional training to elide the distinction between theory and informal theory and, in so doing, created a more useful theoretical narrative.

Others accomplished this synthesis differently. Brenda attributed her understanding of student experience primarily to her background—noting that her approach stems from her cultural background and more specifically her mother's parenting. In our interviews, Tom frequently referenced his graduate training but did not identity particular concepts with specific theorists. Instead, he noted:

> I tend to be one of those people who can take information from anything and kind of apply it in some way…so I found all of it [theoretical approaches] to be fairly useful. I don't try to pigeonhole myself into one particular approach. I think that [all] students are different…so if I can honestly have the same approach with every single student I'm not [going to] be as effective.

Explaining how theory functioned as a background layer, Tom noted that "you get to know pretty quickly some theories are useful in some situations and not so useful in other situations" and that as a result it "definitely helps a lot too just having that background" so that he could fall back on theory as needed. As a result, Hughes stated he tried to focus his work on supporting individual students as they sought to reach their own developmental goals. In this regard, his position echoed that of Alice, a colleague in residence life. Summing up her work with students, for example, Alice

noted that every time she works with a student "it's a different person in front of you, so you're never [going to] have the exact same [approach] with each person."

Of the six advisors and three residence life professionals I interviewed, only two described having made explicit use of formal theory. Suggesting that theory use is at least in part the product of institutional culture, Lisa noted that she had frequently utilized strategies based on student development theory when previously working at a medium-sized urban research university "because our dean at the time…did his dissertation in that [area] and just had us working [in] these small work groups and [going] through all the different theories and approaches." While she noted that this experience served as a background for her current work and had produced some desirable outcomes at her prior institution, Lisa also suggested that this did not occur in her current academic advising work. Barbara, the other student affairs practitioner who discussed specific theories, stated that she found that most were not useful, but when asked to identify specific theories that she found problematic, she preferred to focus on an approach that she found useful—thinking about balancing between appropriate levels of challenge and support (Sanford, 1968).

Informal Theory and Contextual Truth Claims

The informal theories demonstrated by academic advisors differed considerably from one another. Ranging from the theoretical eclecticism advocated by Tom to the more directive questioning designed to promote self-actualization of Jean, each informal theory was unique to the advisor. Nonetheless, the informal theories that I observed seemed well-adapted to work with a wide range of students. While some advisors described borrowing parts of their informal theories from other advisors, most acknowledged that their advising practices likely departed significantly from their colleagues. Several advisors, for example, described their commitment to proactive engagement while noting that they were unsure that their colleagues approached their work similarly—with one advisor noting that: "we don't sit on each other's advising sessions so we don't know how each other [advisor works]…[but] we hear rumors from students." Statements such as these seemed to reflect a lack of clarity about how informal theories should be evaluated and validated among the advisors with whom I spoke.

Participants from residence life likewise had highly sophisticated informal theories. Hughes, for example, framed most of his work around the concepts of connectedness and engagement. While Alice also frequently emphasized engagement in our conversations, her informal theory was focused on a respect for the individual student, which led her to emphasize being honest and straightforward. Though she felt strongly that this approach was right for her and worked well, Alice also believed that there was considerable variety in the way that staff at The Commons thought about student experience and admitted that a different informal theory might work better for someone else. Likewise, Barbara indicated that her own informal theory was rooted in the belief that there was a "sort of similarity" between her own experiences in college and those of her students; as a result, she felt that her informal theory was best understood via her own history. Interestingly, however, Barbara was also the residence life professional who most consistently emphasized the importance of viewing students as both individuals and as members of a group. To that end, she spoke frequently about "assessing the needs of the community" in order to provide a background layer of programming and structure that would be good for the majority of students. Barbara also emphasized that in her work she then took pains to follow-up with individuals or smaller groups to ensure that everyone was having positive experiences.

Informal theories were frequently based on elements of existing scholarship but rarely on the wholesale application of formal theory. For example, some advisors referred directly to recent empirical research as they described the guiding concepts employed in their research. Marie, for example, referenced research on "millennials" emerging from demography when describing the typical student in the School of Management and Information Technology. Tom also mentioned having consulted recent higher education scholarship and went on to indicate that his understanding of student experience was structured by some of his own attempts to answer questions about the students with whom he worked via original research. More often than not, however, the role of guiding concepts was made clear not by an abstract discussion of theory itself but in the way that advisors spoke about how they addressed specific student experiences.

Across both sites, Nevitt Sanford's (1968) description of the role of challenge, support, and readiness in student experience was the most frequently employed guiding concept. It was unclear whether this application was attributable to the research itself, its widespread diffusion, or an understanding derived from experience. Barbara, for example, began every interaction with a student that I observed by asking about classes and "everything else." When I asked her why she did so, she indicated that she needed to know "where they are, how they're doing" in order to know how best to respond. A short time later, when responding to my statement of a tentative model of student learning and development, she indicated that being able to accurately gauge a student's current mental state was essential because "the presence of something challenging [causes] the reflection, it promotes the learning" that is the goal of her practice. Without challenge, she notes, there is no impetus for change.

Regardless of where the concept emerged from, however, these guiding concepts structured their work with students. Linda, for example, described her work as a careful balance of "hand holding," and "making sure that you're supporting whatever growth [a student is] engaged in" based in part on the student's progression through the College of Management and Information Technology. Finally, Tom suggested the important role that readiness plays in structuring a student's response to offered support—noting that: "Sometimes you have to encourage students more than once. Sometimes it's like a broken record with students."

Described in greater detail above, Jean's use of structured questions to promote reflection is also consistent with the dialectical push-and-pull nature of student affairs work rooted in a conception of challenge and support. Jean's advising practice was also consistent with Tom's belief that sometimes a "broken record" approach with students could be beneficial. During the sessions that I observed with Jean, she would frequently present a piece of information, ask a question about it, present the information again in another form, ask the student to respond to it, and then conclude the session by recapping all of the salient information. In follow-up conversations, Jean mentioned that she would occasionally also summarize the information for the student via email. Though she expressed uncertainty as to how well this information was received by students, it is a behavior entirely consistent with Sanford's (1968) contention that there is an appropriate level of support for each readiness level. Her work provided information in multiple forms, accessible to students of varying levels of developmental readiness.

Others also noted that they adjusted the level of support that they provided depending on the maturity of the students with whom they were working. In our interview, Marie depicted her work as an evolving partnership wherein students are asked to take increasing levels of responsibility for their education and their decisions—going on to state that the goal is to "try to help them with decision-making, not…make decisions for them." Similarly, Lisa described first-year stu-

dents as having relatively high support needs; an interim step where they learned how to be successful at the School of Management and Information Technology; and finally, a dramatically reduced need for support in the students' final years at Central University.

Most of the guiding concepts employed by the academic advisors focused on the uniqueness of the individual student. Building on the concept of engagement described above, Lisa tried to approach every student as an individual, explaining that each student experienced their developmental trajectory in a different way—saying that "growth and development is different for every individual." Meanwhile, Brenda described the advising process thusly: "it's about them figuring out what they should do, and…guiding them [to do] so." While these are the clearest statements regarding the role of the individual, all the participants suggested at some point that the advising process had to be tailored to the needs of the students with whom they were working.

As part of the second interview protocol, I asked participants to respond to three or four scenarios based on common student experiences encountered by practitioners at Central University. Neither the residence life professionals nor academic advisors responded to these questions using formal theory. However, all the responses confirmed the crucial role played by informal theories. Most of these informal theories were based on guiding concepts derived from, influenced by, or otherwise similar to key elements of student learning and development theory. For instance, Tom noted that when he was struggling to find an approach that would work for a student he often fell back on engagement literature and focused on increasing a student's sense of connection to Central University. Likewise, Linda stated that her default response for a student struggling to adjust socially would be to "get them engaged in a community." Marie expanded on that concept— noting that an environment as large as Central University "can be as big or small as you want…it is a big place but…getting involved in clubs and organizations and getting to know your faculty…getting involved in some things that you're interested" can reduce the environment to a manageable human scale. Alice and Hughes—both residence life professionals—echoed this sentiment.

In thinking about informal theory, the advisors I spoke with articulated two levels of intervention—one at the group level and one at the individual level. At the group level, advisors seek to foster engagement by introducing students to affinity groups. Again, Linda notes that she "just [tries] to get them engaged in a community." To start, these communities may be based on a student's social identity— Linda stated, for example, that she might recommend that a Catholic student join the Newman Society—but participants consistently suggested the importance of broad-based engagement strategies. Brenda described her engagement work as "a multi-step process" involving a discussion of the transition to college, student interests, and a shared search for involvement opportunities.

Uncertain Knowledge

As noted in the "Extended Case Analysis as Research Design" section, ECA regards the researcher as the instrument for the production of findings, and to that end, I was intentional in my use of reflexive strategies throughout the process of data collection. Originally trained as a post-positivist social scientist, when I examined my fieldnotes, I found myself surprised by the frequency and extent to which I described a powerful need to validate the thinking of the participants with whom I worked. Throughout my research, I have come to know them as bright, capable, and experienced practitioners. In my fieldnotes, however, I found that I had frequently been asked to

respond to questions from participants about whether their answer was "correct"—a reflexive observation that departed from routine questions from participants about whether an answer sufficiently addressed a topic to meet my needs. This time, however, comments from participants were designed to gauge the accuracy of their responses. Many of these interactions occurred during the participant observation rather than interview component of my study, so I have relatively few verbatim excerpts elaborating these exchanges. However, interview transcript did capture several that demonstrate this pattern.

For example, after thoughtfully describing how a student might gain greater self-confidence, an academic advisor somewhat ironically said: "I am not sure of that answer. It is probably a combination of things, I guess, with most people; right?" Another was self-deprecating—stating that "hopefully I've given you…valuable information." Yet another expressed frustration at my questioning: "I never know if I'm answering your questions. I know there's no right or wrong answer, but I don't know if they're addressing what you want to hear." More broadly, though, this study offered participants the opportunity to hear their own words back from the mouth of someone that they considered a scholar. The words of one academic advisor capture this best: "You actually made me think about things that I hadn't…certainly, they're in my head, but I hadn't verbalized…when you verbalize something, it's like holy cow, like a light bulb went off." Paradoxically, my aspiration—like that of any ethnographer—was simply to do justice to the richness and wisdom that I found in the site of my research. The words in which that participant found wisdom were, in fact, her own.

Discussion

Through its use of ECA and CPPE, this study offers important insight into the study of knowledge production. That is to say, this study reveals not just the experiences of higher education administrators but also establishes a research strategy for similar future work. ECA uses a critical theoretical lens both to select appropriate problems and predict the scenarios likely to be encountered in fieldwork (Burawoy, 1998). It also relies on the reflexive judgments of the researcher to surface discrepant observations through interaction with local experts and to "extend" the existing theory-base by proposing modifications to it to account for the observed divergences. The newly extended theory can then be further evaluated via additional research more in keeping with normative social science. While ECA has been previously used to study topics such labor organizations and community-based educational programs (Burawoy, 1991), it remains seldom used among educational researchers.

Likewise, CPPE is seldom cited as an epistemological orientation by social scientists despite its focus on providing solutions to human problems based on human solutions (Rorty, 1999). CPPE holds that truth claims are produced without reference to broader essentialist forms and are instead the product of contextual, value-laden judgments about which truth claims are useful in explaining the norm-governed world as individuals encounter it (Rorty, 1991). While its connection to the theory-to-practice problem described in this paper is clear, CPPE has more far-reaching uses. Its focus on context is fundamentally consistent with broader constructivist orientations held by many qualitative researchers but also lays bare any lingering pretension to objectivity. As a result, CPPE provides badly needed critical engagement with theory that could help qualitative researchers to anchor their work to social reality without reverting to post-positivism's objectivity or slipping into a post-modernism's uncertainty.

Importantly, this paper not only makes claims regarding the relevance of ECA and CPPE, it also demonstrates their relevance by producing empirical findings. In so doing, it provides an example of how future work might unfold. Literature suggests that there is a problematic connection between theory and practice: we produce formal theories because we presume them to be generally true, but even if they are generally true, they are not universally applicable. In this extended case study, practitioners do not appear to utilize formal theory to guide their practice directly. Instead, they produce informal theories that they use to guide practice. Combining practitioner experience and guiding concepts derived from formal theories, these informal theories can become quite sophisticated and when they take into account institutional context, they seem likely to promote desirable student outcomes. This understanding confirms portions of Reason and Kimball's (2012) theory-to-practice model while complicating others.

Every one of the participants in this study had a clear set of informal theories that they employed to construct their practices, but few found scholarly theories useful. As such, despite the fact that most participants had formal training in higher education or a related field, many did not see the clear connection between formal and informal theory as proposed by Parker (1977) and reaffirmed by Reason and Kimball (2012). In fact, the lack of apparent connection led one participant to label formal theory as "horseshit." At its most useful, scholarly theory was seen as a form of background—akin to ambient noise, pleasant to have but not entirely necessary. Consequently, this study demonstrated limited empirical support for the first theoretical prediction derived from Reason and Kimball (2012), which stated: "practitioners will use formal theory." A more accurate, pragmatically-oriented understanding of formal theory usage would hold that practitioners will utilize formal theory if and when it is more useful to them to do so than the alternative model of student experience—including those offered by informal theory.

This study also suggests that the lack of formal theory usage did not negatively impact the sophistication with which practitioners thought about their work or the experiences that they created for students. Instead, as Love (2012) suggests, they embraced informal theory. However, findings also suggest that the dismissal of formal theory is not inevitable. The majority of participants seemed influenced by what Reason and Kimball (2012) call "guiding concepts." Responding to the call for engaged scholarship set forth by Bensimon (2007) and Kezar (2000), there is no reason that scholarship cannot focus both on the production of formal theory as it always has as well as application via these guiding concepts. Using this approach preserves the very real advantages of rigor and generalizability inherent in our current system of theory production as articulated by both Bensimon (2007) and Evans and Guido (2012). However, it also meets the need for contextualized knowledge claims proposed by the second theoretical prediction derived from Reason and Kimball (2012): "practitioners will create contextualized knowledge claims." And indeed, this study demonstrated that these contextualized knowledge claims were frequently produced. Consistent with the third theoretical prediction derived from Reason and Kimball (2012), it also found that contextualized knowledge claims varied from person-to-person.

Existing literature also treats at least some types of theory (e.g., informal and implicit theory) as a form of knowledge production. Consistent with the fourth theoretical prediction of Reason and Kimball (2012), this study provides limited empirical evidence of this production process and thereby hints at variation over time. However, as noted above, most participants regarded formal theory as having less utility than contextualized knowledge claims. Informal theory did evolve over time as suggested by Love (2012) and Reason and Kimball (2012), and with this evolution, the use to which informal theory was put could be seen to shift as well. As one advisor

noted, each interaction with a student could foster a whole new understanding of student experience. That led to an ever-changing lexicon of strategies for practice whereas the same dynamism was not found for formal theory. Consequently, the fourth theoretical prediction might be revised to read: the nature and use of contextualized knowledge claims will change over time as practitioners seek to refine their understanding. Once again consistent with the tenets of CPPE, the way that practitioners describe this understanding is most typically use-oriented: that is, they seek to refine their understanding in order to alter their practice.

In addition to testing these four theoretical predictions, this paper also offers broader insight into the politics and possibilities of knowledge construction in student affairs. As described above, an incidental finding revealed that many participants were uncomfortable when asked to position themselves as arbiters of what theory was and whether it was true. Not only did they seek to conform to my expectancies as a researcher, they also simply wanted to know whether they were right. This finding suggests that practitioner knowledge may be undervalued by scholars at present. However, research methods that are widely-used at present do not do a particularly good job moving between scholarly knowledge, expert judgment, and empirical data. Consequently, the empirical findings from this study begin to bend back again to the more conceptual ones: there is a pressing need for the methodological tools offered by ECA and for the epistemological insights offered by CPPE.

Implications

This study offers both empirical and conceptual implications pertaining to the use of a critical, theory-engaged methodology in educational research. One of the clearest implications for this study concerns the relationship between formal and informal theory. While many scholarly texts focus on the rigor and generalizability of a formal theory, practitioners draw "guiding concepts" from these texts eclectically. The theory-to-practice conversion would be facilitated by greater attention by scholars to the possible ways that the formal theories they propose will be repurposed by practitioners. Rather than relying on participants or secondary literature to produce them, guiding concepts should become a key part of the way that scholars present formal theory. This implication echoes Kezar's (2000) suggestion that practitioners will read higher education scholarship only when they can see it as a representation and extension of their work. It will also ensure that formal theories are interpreted by practitioners as scholars intend per Evans and Guido (2012). More publication outlets that emphasize the publication of works accessible to practitioners yet structured by careful attention to various types of theory would facilitate this process. While this implication is most tightly connected to empirical findings when framed as limited to publication venues focused on student affairs, there seems little doubt that critical engagement with theory would likewise be beneficial in other areas of educational research.

Another clear implication concerns the connection between practice and student experience. Participants repeatedly suggested the importance of both of their own experiential knowledge and the experiential knowledge of students. Since student affairs practice is principally concerned with the creation of student experiences designed to foster learning and development, the field could benefit from greater attention to assessing whether their practices actually produce the experiences for which they are designed. This implication echoes Bensimon's (2007) warning that we ought to be attentive to whether we are producing the outcomes that we set out to create. In this regard, one of the most significant limitations of this study was the inability to include student-level research data. Future work should investigate the extent to which the expert judgments of

practitioners actually capture student experiences. This form of reflexivity has broad implications throughout critical educational research wherein good practice is predicated on the ability to identify and address unintended consequences of hidden assumptions, biases, and beliefs. To that end, a regular component of reflexive practice should include assessment and self-evaluation activities designed to structure thinking about the field of praxis uniting practice and experience.

Another major implication of this study concerns how this empirical research might be produced. Study participants consistently sought affirmation of their ideas and perspectives. As Love (2012) has indicated, this stems in part from the seeming difficulty in reconciling personal experience with scholarly knowledge. ECA (Burawoy, 1991; 1998; 2009)—the utility of which is demonstrated by this paper's empirical findings—provides a means for accomplishing this reconciliation. The expert knowledge of practitioners represents a meaningful supply of information about student learning and development that could be harnessed to determine how formal theories might be revised on an ongoing basis. To capture this information, practitioners must be well-versed in formal theory, reflexive practice, and research techniques. However, producing highly-trained scholar-practitioners and honoring the knowledge that they possess might lead to both more accurate formal theory and more carefully considered informal theories. In this process, ECA can be useful because of its utility in connecting informal and formal theories through a shared set of methodological epistemological assumptions. And in turn, we can produce more practice-oriented scholarship and more theory-informed practice. Once again, there seems little reason to believe that this implication would not apply equally well in other areas of critical, theory-engaged educational research.

Perhaps the most important implication of this study is simply the importance of asking critical questions and using theory to help understand the results. Findings from this study demonstrate the potential for the application of critical, theory-engaged methodologies in educational research. Critical post-pragmatism offers an epistemological lens suitable for the exploration of the multiple competing truth claims that exist in many educational realms—not just in student affairs practice. Meanwhile, extended case analysis allows theories to be held up to the lens of focused empirical observations—and to offer suggestions for how these same theories might be reconstructed based on discrepant findings. Using both a critical post-pragmatist epistemology and extended case analysis provides a critical, theory-engaged methodology that can be used both to produce new empirical findings and to challenge underlying assumptions about social reality.

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Disrupting the Able-Bodied Normativity of Shared Power in the Duoethnographic Process: A Critical, Disability Studies Lens

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Abstract

Duoethnography (DE) is a collaborative research method where two or more individuals explore similar and different meanings of a phenomenon, based on each of their life experiences (Norris, 2008). Created by Joe Norris and Rick Sawyer, the approach is informed by the narrative tradition of storytelling and builds on Pinar's concept of currere. This paper will use one author's experience with a DE project as a "case," which provides a context for both authors to juxtapose their histories with DE. Our purpose is to uncover and disrupt many of the assumptions of able-bodied normativity within DE's methodological processes, as this has yet to be explored within the duoethnographic literature. More specifically, we will use a reflexive process about the tenets of duoethnography as identified above to better understand the role of power within co-researcher differences, and to also explore the challenge and personal risk of research methods that require relationship, care, trust, and vulnerability.

Keywords: duoethnography, currere, normativity, ableism

Background

Duoethnography is a form of research that connects the narratives of two individuals with Pinar's (1975, 1994) concept of *currere*. The use of *currere* within duoethnography positions the researchers' lives as the curriculum—the sites of the research—with the goal of using themselves to support deeper exploration and understanding of a phenomena. Our conversation uses one of our recent encounters with duoethnography as a "case" through which we use the method to explore various methodological questions. Here, we draw on a number of the duoethnographic tenets outlined by Norris and Sawyer (2012). We ensure our stories and voices are made explicit in order to intentionally juxtapose and disrupt metanarratives at the individual level by unpacking our personally held beliefs, and we invite the reader to further critique the relationship between the personal and larger narrative (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). Duoethnographies are more than a conversational transcript; the conversation is inclusive of both the research and the analysis. In duoethnographies, readers are asked to bear-witness to the act of researchers engaging in a dialogic encounter where they explore and juxtapose their experiences and beliefs (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). It is through

this explicit juxtaposition of stories where "meanings can be and often are transformed through the research act" (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 9).

Duoethnography is also about making explicit how people "can experience the same phenomena differently" (p. 17). In our dialogical encounter, we also share our different experiences of previously engaging with the methodology of duoethnography. Specifically, we use duoethnography to explore its potential as a critical, qualitative method through our discussions about normativity and ableism, related to research methods, disability, privilege, and the academy. While this approach calls for researchers to engage in a process that strives for research "with" and not "on" another individual (Norris & Sawyer, 2012), we find ourselves pushing the boundaries of this claim in a methodology that predominantly privileges written text. As a result of this process, we reconceptualise meanings of the past and found our own perspectives changed in how we understand and critique duoethnography as a critical qualitative methodology.

Encountering Duoethnography

Kathy

I remember when we met at the American Education Research Association conference in 2013 based on our mutual work and research in the disability community. While we live in different countries, we continued to communicate via email about our research, especially our shared interested—yet varied experiences with—duoethnography. When you suggested we explore duoethnography as a critical methodology, I was very excited! I remember when I learned about duoethnography, a research method created by Rick Sawyer and Joe Norris (Norris, 2008). The approach is based on learning about a topic through a discussion (Lund & Nabavi, 2008). The approach expands on William Pinar's concept of currere, where people explore their own perspectives by engaging through dialogue (Norris, 2008). It builds on the power of storytelling and personal narrative. So the idea here, is that we revisit our discussions through email, and build and rework our dialogue.

So where should we begin? I wonder if we should start by talking about our own experiences with duoethnography (DE)? We each seem to have varied histories with the process, and I know that I have questioned whether it is a methodology that can be taken up by everyone. Darren Lund introduced me to DE, and has also published on the topic (Lund & Evans, 2006). When I first heard of DE, I was a student and very interested in learning about critical methodologies. While I initially didn't consider it as such, as I read about it, what attracted me to DE was that it was about sharing and co-creating knowledge through a dialogical encounter from two dissimilar experiences or perspectives. Aspects of the process spoke to me: two individuals distributing power in the research process, learning from and with each other through a shared reflexivity, and considering our current situation while also acknowledging our histories. For these reasons, I ended up engaging in DE with a colleague about our own different experiences and backgrounds about professional boundaries (see Sitter & Hall, 2012). I learned a great deal from that process and how DE can be a process that brings together divergent positions to develop new knowledge about a topic. I'm curious what attracted you to duoethnography? And whether you consider it to be a critical methodology?

Emily

I "found" duoethnography almost by accident it felt like. I had some narrative data—summaries of conversations, as well as email and text exchanges between a friend and me, over the course of a few years, which I wanted to analyze. I began my research trying to use video to support analysis of our narratives. My friend is a young woman who was labeled with intellectual disability and our conversation began about five years ago when she asked me "how did they know that I had *it*?" The "*it*" that my friend referred to was the label of intellectual disability. Originally, I wanted to answer questions like these: In what ways can participatory video be used to explore, develop, and expand the narratives of identity with young adults with intellectual disability? And, how do these individuals understand and interpret their own narratives, and how might this empower them? What this original approach and set of guiding questions left out, however, was where I was situated within these narratives- most of which began as co-constructed conversations between myself and my friend. I am a university professor, a white, cisgender woman, who was pursuing the academic exercise of data analysis. Significantly, what this approach left out was how our conversations reflected not just her identity work, but my own internalized scripts that were being examined, questioned, and reconceptualized. And this was when I found a methodological text on duoethnography and the method seemed to provide exactly what was missing in how I'd previously conceived of this research. Most importantly, was what Sawyer and Norris (2012) refer to "bracketing in," versus traditional notions of the researcher "bracketing themselves out," typically in the name of increased "objectivity."

In reflection, I had been on a "search for method" since my friend and I began our conversations, and especially as I became more fully aware of and comfortable in the uncomfortable space of placing myself within these conversations—a space and process that narrative inquiry, as method, did not fully address. I was also thrilled to reconnect with you after reading your chapter in the Norris, Sawyer, & Lund (2012) text. I thought very early on that duoethnography had great potential as a critical method and that it posed some significant challenges within the academy—this was where I initially reached out to you. However, it was when I encountered my own power and privilege in my research with my friend that I wanted to write about the method with you, as someone more experienced with DE, whom I trusted. My turn to DE as a way to uncover my own role in co-constructed narratives with my friend have actually uncovered the challenge and personal risk of using a research method that requires relationship, care, trust, and vulnerability. For our conversation right now I want to unpack this idea of DE as a critical method a bit more.

The question of critical method is one that, on the surface as it relates to duoethnography, seems easy to answer. As a non-prescriptive and non-linear method, which relies on researcher difference, that captures the voices of each researcher explicitly, and that uses a reflexive and dialogic process to disrupt and re-story metanarratives of a phenomena and the self (Norris & Sawyer, 2012), duoethnography seems absolutely critical. I wanted to engage in this process with you to explore this question and find a possible answer. Do you think of duoethnography as critical?

Duoethnography as a Critical Methodology: Power and Privilege

Kathy

Your question is interesting, as I consider that most of my research and community work is guided by critical theories. Freirean pedagogy and critical disability studies predominantly inform how I approach participatory arts-based research, where I think that working alongside community members using processes that are accessible and honor different ways of knowing are key. However, when I first learned about DE, I never thought of it as a "critical" methodology. What largely influenced my frame-of-reference with DE was the work of Gadamer and the idea of the hermeneutic circle, as it involves a process of engaging in a conversation by moving back and forth between our histories, what we know, and it also calls for us to put our assumptions and what we know into play (Gadamer, 1975, 2004). It was only when I actually participated in my first DE that I began to understand how power was shared between both my colleague and myself in this process. It was then where I began to see commonalities between critical, participatory-based approaches with DE. As we were both in the roles of "researcher and participant" we were able to make decisions about what we share, how we share it, and the ways in which we engage in the DE process together. I still find DE extremely vulnerable, but yet that is also a reminder of what researchers often ask of participants!

As I previously mentioned, my first DE research was with a colleague. We were both cisgender, white, non-disabled, and held a strong awareness of our different positionalities (he was a psychologist, I was a social worker, and we were exploring the topic of professional boundaries). At the time of our DE, I was a PhD student, he had recently completed his Masters and we both worked in the community. I found the duoethnographic research process a positive experience. We were both new to the methodology but we had the time to work through the process and co-create new knowledge in areas that came through our discussions.

Emily

What are your thoughts about this method and "if it can be taken up by everyone?" I think I should backtrack a bit and tell you about the friend who was going to be my co-researcher. Our friendship began five years ago when I was a new, assistant professor at a large, public university and worked in a special education/teacher licensure program. During this time I had the opportunity to meet a young woman in her mid-20's, who was part of a segregated program to support access to post-secondary settings for young adults labeled with intellectual disability (ID). During the time I continued to work at that university, my friend would often spend afternoons during the week in my office. Initially, our conversations almost always began with her asking questions about her history and life- I remember the day that she asked me "how did they know that I have *it*?" I asked her what she meant by "it" and she said "disability, how did they know?" She asked if it was her thick glasses, the arm that was smaller and not as developed as the other, or if it was something about how she walked or spoke. I have other disabled friends- some with visible and some with invisible disability, most who claim this identity. But this was the first time I had ever had someone I'd grown to care about as an individual, someone I respected and valued in my life, ask me, as a non-disabled professional, this question about themselves and their body/mind. Until this point and that question ("how do they know I have *it*?") our conversations often began with an experience that she had had and that she was reflecting about in light of a newly acquired sense

of herself as an individual who had experienced a significant amount of oppression. We spoke as friends, although I was able to give her my opinion based on my own professional experience with special education and other disability-related systems.

Kathy

Your friend's questions about *"it"* are so powerful. And I also think her comment touches on some of the critiques of the social model of disability. The social model is critical in understanding how people are disabled from/by their environment, and if society addresses these barriers, then the disability is removed. While this can be easier to understand with physical barriers, her question reminds me of the attitudinal barriers that are embedded in normative assumptions of how people are "expected" to be in the world. For me, your friend's reference to *"it"* embodies this reality.

Emily

Early on in our friendship, when I thought about my privilege, I know that I tried to be aware of it and use it in ways that could support her to uncover aspects of herself that she was newly exploring, and also to help build a circle/system of support for her to create the life that she talked about wanting—a life that included continuing to live in her own apartment, having paid work in the community, being respected by her family, and having meaningful, social relationships. During that period I never thought critically of the power and privilege I have, as a white, educated, middle-class, non-disabled woman; rather I acknowledged to myself that I had this power and believed that if I used it to help my friend get access to the things that she wanted in her life then it would mitigate these myriad differences between us. Some of our conversations were very vulnerable—for her to trust me to talk about her body, her history, and her lived experiences so openly. And also for her to call me out on my privilege ("you don't have to do this because you don't have *it*, right?" as she was navigating various disability-related funding systems). Until the time/space that our relationship and our communication became a site for research, I thought that we would just be friends- not a white, able-bodied professor and a person labeled with intellectual disability who was living within all of the constraints of the disability service system.

Kathy

Your last sentence really captures what many people with various types of privilege—including myself—can relate to as a false and problematic assumption. I know I am guilty of it. I'm wondering if you can explain a bit more how that approach has unfolded in your research with duoethnography?

Emily

As I described above, I had previously understood my power—especially when my friend talked to me about challenges she faced that, as she pointed out "you don't have to do this because you don't have *it*, right?" But it really began to surface for me when I began to write about DE. This "encountering" feels like hitting a wall or a punch in my stomach when I allow myself to *feel*

it. I can write and talk about the power and privilege that I know that I have, in relation to my friend. I am a white, able-bodied, woman who has had access to doctoral level of education and is an assistant professor. My friend is a woman of color, who was labeled with an intellectual disability in middle school, and lives within the disability service system. The very real "*feeling*" of my power and privilege, in relation to someone I care about personally, is something that I know I haven't encountered in a research methods text or in many pieces of academic writing.

Different Ways of Knowing

Kathy

When I have thought about the accessibility of this method, specifically in written form, I am reminded of Heron and Reason's (1997) four ways of knowing: Experiential (knowing through direct encounter), propositional (knowing through theories and statements), presentational (creative forms of expression), and practical (knowing through doing). In honoring different forms of knowledge, I also think people communicate their truth and share their practical wisdom in different ways, and in these spaces, voices can take shape beyond the written and spoken word. When thinking of language, presentational knowing acknowledges there are many different languages in which meaning is created. For instance, the language of colors and shapes also leads to paintings and sculptures, and the language of both still and moving images can lead to visual storytelling. Written and spoken communication are not always the most accessible ways to share knowledge, and I find myself asking if there are ways in which DE can further support presentational ways of knowing? I find participatory, visual arts-based methods more accessible. For instance, in photovoice, people are asked to take photographs about their experiences and/or perspectives related to the topic being explored and subsequently use their images as a means to explore the topic amongst the group. Similarly, participatory video involves handing the camera over to the community to develop and create videos as a means to explore issues and honor stories and lived experiences. People do not have to be able to read or write to engage in these processes. Accessibility also includes audience accessibility; the visual affords ways to reach people and share knowledge in multimodal ways. However, I find DE in written form may present participatory challenges. Must a person have the ability to articulate a strong self-awareness of their own social location and personal history to be able to engage in this process? Or in a very practical sense, what if someone can't read or write? By privileging the written word in meaning making, does the DE process support ableist assumptions?

What I found interesting in your work Emily, was that you attempted to unpack these ideas especially as they relate to accessibility and knowledge, by introducing video. I'm curious how found this process? Did it create a more inclusive space?

Emily

My friend and I spent years primarily using in-person conversations or text (emails, text messages, and text summaries of our phone conversations) to communicate. As I said earlier, I came to DE after talking with my friend about doing research together—analyzing our communication. Originally thought I'd only be analyzing her narratives. My intention had been to use participatory video as a tool to use narrative analysis to understand her identity work. When I found DE (as I described above) I felt video could be useful to bridge the divide of 1000 miles between

my friend and me (I had moved to a new university a few states away). Since my friend lives on a very limited budget (she works part-time at minimum wage and relies on state-funded, supported housing once she had to move out of her apartment) I knew that she didn't have and couldn't afford a smart-phone. I was able to use some grant monies from my university to purchase a portable, flip camera and a plane ticket to where my friend lives. Over the phone my friend and I planned that when I came we would learn how to use the camera together and that I would purchase a number of addressed/stamped envelopes to mail it between us. Each one of us would keep it for a few weeks and then mail it to the other to watch and respond. We would use our video recorded conversations to, in essence, analyze our historical conversations that existed in emails, electronic documents, text messages, and memory. I struggled with the issue of knowledge production for ourselves, versus knowledge production in the academy- and what would emerge as the product of our conversation/research. My friend agreed that she would work on a written manuscript with me since I needed that to eventually get tenure. This was what we had planned to do with video and DE—but what happened when I was preparing and then traveled to see her disrupted the course of our project and also our relationship as a whole.

We never were actually able to use video to continue our conversations and use DE to understand them more fully. A few days before I was traveling to see my friend and learn how to use the camera together she called me very upset. She told me that the woman who ran the family-home program where she now lived would not allow me in the house. This was a firm house/program rule. When I asked my friend how she felt about this she became very upset. When I called her the next day I told her that we did not need to pursue the research together—to set up the camera and establish our system of recording and mailing it back and forth. But that I was still coming (I had a plane ticket) and that I just wanted to be able to see her. But it was this conversation that ended our friendship. My friend told me that the woman she lived with wanted to know what the purpose of the research was because most people did research "*on*" disabled individuals, told her that I was likely not a "real" professor because why would I have a friendship with *her*, and that she no longer needed friends who were outside her program. This brings me back to consider the "possibility" of video in the construction of new knowledge—and yes! I believe that video offered possibility in access to our constructing new knowledge together that would have been difficult otherwise for a number of reasons, but especially related to the privileging of the written word in DE. But because of other factors related to some of the enormous differences between each of our lives- and the taking away of her own autonomy and control based on policies of the program she lived within- these possibilities were never explored.

Kathy

That's terrible. It doesn't sound like there is a lot of autonomy and decision-making power for your friend. I can understand why this was so emotional for her to talk about.

Emily

This is where critical reflection about power begins for me. My friend and I could have a shared sense of power in our relationship and thus in how we constructed the idea of this research together. But as a non-white, disabled woman, living within disability systems and having been systematically denied opportunities to education and a life integrated in the community, I possess power and privilege in my life that she will never have based on our differences in every marker

of identity besides gender. Although my friend possesses a form of "indigenous knowledge" (Chilisa, 2012) that I believed was essential to some of the tenets/aims of DE, our friendship was unable to mitigate the able-bodied and normative expectations of the academy. And, even more so, the deeply institutionalized forms of structural and social oppression that exist for disabled people. Perhaps our DE work was achieving a kind of truth—"speaking a truth that is not otherwise made visible by normative ways of knowing or coming to know." As such it represents a powerful and important example of Heron and Reason's (1997) experiential knowing—knowing through direct encounter. And perhaps, by sharing power within our conversations my friend and I were able to achieve this critical aim just in that space- our conversations. But this sense of shared power and privilege could not translate into the spaces of what happens before and after the field of research, if that makes sense.

I'm left with loose ends and a feeling of untidiness after writing this—in acknowledging and accepting the deep tensions between relational space and research space of my friend and I specifically because within DE, the relational space is the research space. I wonder how you experienced shared power in your experience in DE and if this is similar to how you've experienced it using other, critical research methods with disabled individuals?

Kathy

My experience with DE was very transparent and I did find it extremely collegial. In one of my experiences, we actually recorded a 2-hour conversation, transcribed it, then we went "back and forth" revisiting our positions and further reflecting on our comments. We each had the autonomy to make the decision of what was included and/or excluded in our written dialogue. If we had different ideas on a topic, we would incorporate that into the DE and write about it and explore it more from our own perspectives. I guess you could say we both "actively" participated in the process, as we decided how we wanted to present our voices, and how what we wanted to share in our writing. We talked about the vulnerability of it, which is also why I appreciated the time that we had to reflect on the writing itself. From when we started to when we finalized our completed manuscript, it was 6-7 months.

However, I think your experience with DE touches on an important part of duoethnography—and perhaps many other methodologies—where sharing power in the relational space is understood as critical to the process, but there are also limitations in that the power doesn't carryover; it doesn't address the structural or systemic forms of oppression your friend faces outside of the research context. I have noticed similarities between DE and other critical methods I've work with. For instance, in different photovoice and participatory video projects where I've worked with disability advocates, an extended length of time was critical in order to develop relationships, trust, and be immersed in the process of critical reflection. Like DE, participants engaging in these visual methods also could decide how and if they represent their experiences and ideas about a topic. However this was primarily done via still and moving images, not written text that does take precedence in DE. This is where I find myself wondering if the written format of DE lends itself as well as arts-based methods do when it comes to addressing power differentials, and other guiding principles of participatory research? It is here where I wonder if DE bumps up against normative assumptions, and if so, is there a way this can be reconciled or addressed?

Sharing Power Outside of the Research Process

Emily

This privileging of the written form, even if using art to approach—this is where you made the distinction in our conversation between mitigating power and transparency in what happens *before* and *after* the research. Leading up to writing this DE with you, I proposed, had accepted, and presented work related to the method and my experience with my friend at a large, educational research conference. My proposal received high scores and comments from reviewers about the critical potential of this emerging method. My paper presentation went well, I suppose. And yet, not one reviewer, panel member, discussant, or audience member who commented noticed the absence of not only my friend's voice in my proposal (it was a single-author submission), but also in the physical space of the conference and panel. This realization for me was also not immediate - but occurred as I was preparing just a few hours before my talk, when I noticed that I had constructed a proposal and paper for these spaces that were based on my voice—specifically, my academic voice that I use in order to meet the normative expectations of the academy and of those in attendance. It brought up for me an early conversation that my friend and I had had, when we decided to do a DE together. She asked if we would present the work at a conference (we had presented at some disability rights conferences about our co-teaching work together at my former university) and I remember profound discomfort as I thought about how to answer her in a way that was honest about the expectations for my work in academia and how the sharing of power between us, in the research field, so to speak, likely would not translate to academic conference spaces and even publication.

In one of our phone conversations you talked about the difference between mitigating power (a tenant of DE, as a method and methodology) and transparency, when doing participatory work with community members and other research project partners. The difference between the two, as you described some of your previous research and the goals of you (a university researcher) and your community partners (who were a group of self-advocates that organized to raise awareness about sexual health as a human right) had particular relevance for me—and especially the consideration of DE as a method that could mitigate power between two individuals, and the question of if this can be done when the research is attached to a university?

Kathy

Yes, I think this is a challenge. As academics, we are bound by certain responsibilities associated with our roles. This includes aspects of Institutional Review Boards (IRB)'s. While I don't think it's about ignoring that in any way, I do think it requires transparency about my roles and responsibilities with the people I work with in the community. When I start a project with people in the community, we discuss what our expectations are, our needs in the research, and what my roles are when it comes to my relationship with the university, and that is our starting point. But it does create challenges when we are working from a participatory framework. That's where I do make a distinction from participatory action research (PAR) and participatory research. My approach with PAR is from beginning to end: inclusive of developing the agenda to the distribution. It's a focus on process, engagement, voice, and yes, mitigating power. But I find that participatory research differs for me in that this "shared collaboration" is focused mostly in the context of fieldwork. The principles of participation and community knowledge guide the work

in the field. This means that the community uses the final pieces in different forums that I might not be involved in. For example, in one project, the community group I worked with continued to share the participatory videos in different spaces, as part of workshops and community presentations. While the videos are on YouTube, over the years, I don't know all of the places the group has shared the videos. The videos have lived on in different spaces as decided by the group. Similarly, when we started the research, I was transparent in my desire to be able to write about the work in peer reviewed journals. While we have co-presented in different forums, we've also worked independently in the distribution. I am still wondering how best to navigate this process.

Emily

I also encountered this during the process of moving the DE work with my friend through my university's institutional review board (IRB), which was when I first contacted you about using duoethnography. I submitted the proposal to my university's IRB and identified my friend as my co-researcher, which fits within the tenets of DE. The head of the IRB returned my proposal to me, very focused on the *"it"* that KJ had previously asked me about- having *"it"* (the label of intellectual disability). The normative work of the IRB went beyond her status as part of a vulnerable population—and seemed to work in very ableist ways to reify intellectual disability as a self-fulfilling way of being, as well as reinforce ableist and normative ideas about the academic expert and where they were positioned in relation to someone labeled with intellectual disability. The head of the IRB repeatedly asked for documentation of "how much" intellectual disability my friend *has*—as if this is an unquestioned "truth" about her being in the world, versus a constructed phenomenon. I recognize that this reflects not only the legitimization and privileging of certain methodologies, but also (and perhaps more so), the ableism that is built into procedures created to "protect" those that they discriminate against. I removed my friend as co-researcher from my proposal; she and I remained the participants together and our relationship the site of the research. But only I was listed as the researcher. My proposal was subsequently approved almost immediately.

Kathy

You asked me earlier how I've experienced shared power in working with critical research methods with disabled individuals, and I'd like to revisit that question here. When it comes to distribution—specifically who and how decisions are made when sharing aspects of participatory arts-based works—that has been a space where participants have made those decisions. In my experience with IRBs, I now indicate that the visual stories are owned by the participants, but I ask permission from the participants (in the consent forms and outlined by the IRB) to write about and share their visual stories in certain spaces. While I do not think this mitigates power, this is where I am currently at in supporting participants leading the decision-making process in public distribution which can open up spaces for what I understand to be "radical incrementalism." Radical incrementalism is about striving for fundamental change, that might result in some minimal improvements to the current status quo, but these changes can lay the foundation for incremental change in the future (Schram 2002). This type of research is grounded in community, where participants are actively involved in leading where the work goes. With the example I shared earlier about participatory videos, this was a research project where disabled activists created videos about their perspectives and experiences with sexual rights, and included these videos as part of a community organizing and human rights initiative to raise awareness. Yet the efforts of these activists

in organizing screenings, exhibitions, putting their videos online, and so on also resulted in mobilizing further support within and beyond the disability community. When I think about radical incrementalism, I think of the voices that are often on the margins being at the forefront.

I find myself coming back to the "written text" as the core means of the DE methodology. This is where I think access and inclusion within the context of critical research must be addressed. I wonder how a space can be created that is inclusive of different ways of knowing, and concomitantly how this can be done through expressing our knowledge beyond the written word. In order to value multimodalities of sharing and developing new knowledge that holds the type of "power" assigned to peer review publications, perhaps this is where the arts can assist in creating such a space? I do think this would require reconsideration to how the weight that is placed on academic publications that challenge normative assumptions. Would it have been different if both you and your friend explored what the word "*it*" meant through an art form? And then you each went back and forth until a shared image was created from both your positionalities? For me, this would be quite powerful. Yet I am still wondering what that would mean when we think about distribution and academic spaces. Perhaps if we are to venture into and develop these spaces—that may be considered radical - we must also create more academic publication channels that support this way of creating new knowledge.

Emily

Your ideas and questions here deeply and powerfully get at some of the questions that I came to you originally wanting to explore, related to duoethnography. I am struck by my original response to your thinking here—sort of an "of course," just look at different forms of representation in disciplines outside the social sciences. And then questions of "how" and "where," when considering my own status as a not-yet-tenured assistant professor within the social science. Where does that leave us here—in our consideration of duoethnography as a critical, qualitative method in educational and community contexts, and in partnership with disabled people? The challenge of this- of true praxis- is tied to the "messiness" of this work- of relationship and the personal within our work, of thinking about research that can be truly inclusive, and how this can be used to, in turn, create spaces for distribution that are expansive of the current, hegemonic peer-review process in social sciences. How can these spaces that critical methods open hold the same power as traditional academic ones?

Kathy

I think that critical methods hold quite a bit of power (or have the potential to) with consideration to honoring voice, lived experiences, decision-making, and collaboration. Attempting new ways to engage in the DE process, such as you've done, are important efforts that raise key questions that must be raised as this methodology continues to evolve. In our discussion, you've given me further insight into this methodology, and also challenged my thinking with how we can potentially address normative assumptions that are implicit in the DE process. I do think that the theories informing DE align with inclusion, and the arts may be one of many different avenues that speak to this. I agree that this will require creating more academic channels that are open to publishing various academic forms of representation. The possibilities of DE are exciting, and I'm glad that we are exploring some of these areas through the process itself.

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Missing Stories: The Messy Processes, Multifaceted Risks, & Multiple Roles of Critical Ethnographers

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Abstract

In this article, four critical ethnographers reflect on dilemmas that arose during individual research projects. We grappled with the question: What does critical ethnography require from us as we work to represent stories that emerge in contexts where students and/or teachers have been marginalized? After engaging in a three-year process of diffractive analysis, we arrived at the notion of missing stories, as stories that involve messy processes, multifaceted risks and multiple roles in the telling and hearing of people's stories in research.

Keywords: *missing stories, diffractive reading, critical ethnography*

> *There are not many people in this world who value the*
> *stories of those who struggle with what to most seems simple.*
> *The honor of sharing those stories ties you to the one speaking.*
> *Like a book the heart can open and close, unlike a book the*
> *heart bleeds: be mindful of the hearts you open.*
> –Haver Jim, Yakama Nation

The opening epigraph by Haver Jim, a former student who worked with Joy in an equity-centered project, grounds our thinking about what happens when we hear, tell, and elicit personal stories from vulnerable populations. It requires that we take seriously questions about who/how we are as researchers and what counts as good scholarship. In this article, we respond to critical race and feminist scholars who have urged us to *think with theory* (Jackson and Mazzei 2012) and move toward representing and doing critical qualitative research that centers on justice for marginalized communities—not merely as a means for promoting our social capital within the academy (Pillow 2003; Villenas 2012).

As four early career scholars, we often reflected upon and discussed "stuck" places, dilemmas of belonging, and representation in our critical ethnographic work. Our ongoing dialogue and diffractive readings (Jackson and Mazzei 2012) yielded the concept of *missing stories*. We conceptualize *missing stories* as encompassing the *processes*, *risks*, and *roles* of the stories we hear and tell in our scholarly work toward justice. By attending to missing stories, we open ourselves

to multiple truths within messy processes (Fine 2007), multifaceted risks in the hearing and telling of stories, and multiple roles in this work.

In Search of "Good Research"

When we consider how to move toward disrupting limiting and unjust norms in traditional scholarship, we take the stance that there is a crucial distinction between truth/the good in research. From an epistemological perspective, truth signifies individuality and singularity, traditional scholarship that accepts that *one* can arrive at a place of truth. This notion informs methodologies and processes, whereby the superiority of a researcher's goals, decisions, and outcomes are mediated and measured by limited, and limiting, perspectives on stories (un)told. Conversely, we envision justice work as plural where researchers move toward *the good* by radically opening themselves to multiple truths and outcomes through collaborative processes (Guitierrez and Penuel 2014; Tuck and McKenszie 2014). This pluralistic stance towards the good led us to unearth missing stories and deepen our collective understandings of justice. It is within the tension of that slash between truth/the good that missing stories are uncovered.

In search of good research, we asked, "What does critical ethnography require from us as we work to represent stories that emerge in contexts where students and/or teachers have been marginalized?" In particular, we grappled with Pillow's (2003) challenge to reflect on "Who can research whom, when, and how?" (176), and Villenas' (2012) charge to reframe the "we" (nosotras), "us" and "others" (nos/otras) of qualitative research. These questions led to collective analyses of both the data in our studies and ourselves—our decisions and movements in relation to justice. This opened up our reconceptualization of knowledge as a lived action (Brayboy and Maughan 2009), which requires more than simply naming injustices. These questions and concepts also opened our dialogue to movements and fractures of knowledge and ways that we must re-envision our work to deepen our processes as critical ethnographers.

Theoretical Frame

Each of our studies engaged in various forms of critical ethnography as methodology (Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Villenas and Foley 2011). Critical race theory in education, critical whiteness studies, and feminist research framed our individual studies. Here, we highlight major premises of each and describe how each framework informed our collective analyses.

Critical race (Delgado and Stefancic 2013) and critical whiteness frameworks (Gilborn 2005; Leonardo 2002) focus on how race and racism impact policies and practices in education (Ladson-Billings 2013), and theorize the role of the researcher in studying race (Castagno 2008; Gallagher 2000; Lensmire 2008; Thompson 2003). The purpose of using CRT in our larger studies was to (a) unmask and explore racism, (b) employ storytelling and counter narrative to give testimony to voices of the oppressed, and (c) critique liberalism and its effects on laws and policies in schools (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). Critical whiteness scholars have theorized the role of the researcher in studying race, resulting in a number of lessons for white[1] researchers doing race work:

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1. In this article we deliberately decapitalize "white" while capitalizing Color and Black as an anti-racist discursive tool to signify the elusive nature of whiteness as an identity marker.

- Whiteness is not monolithic (Gallagher 2000);
- Spatial dynamics shape how race is perceived by oneself and by others (Gallagher 2000);
- Playing the "good white" is highly problematic and must be explored (Thompson 2003, 8);
- Perceived racial matching of the researcher with the participants can be misleading (Gallagher 2000; Twine 2000).

A feminist lens helped us engage issues of identity, belonging, and power, and provided a conceptual orientation to move our conversation beyond a discussion of positionality toward a dialogue about epistemological foundations that sustain power relations, racism, marginalization, and hierarchical researcher-participant relationships. Feminist scholarship helped us navigate "methodological speed bumps" (Stich, Cipollone, Nikischer and Weis 2012) by illuminating contested spaces and lived realities in our studies. It allowed us to work in "the ruins" (St. Pierre and Pillow 2002), and excavate reflective spaces to reconsider representation of subjects. Ultimately, such poststructural feminist perspectives led us to diffractive analysis.

To make sense of the disequilibrium and "stuck" places we encountered in our studies, we re-analyzed data and our researcher-selves from multiple theoretical angles using what several scholars (Jackson and Mazzei 2012; Lather 2014) have termed diffractive analysis. We use the term diffractive analysis cautiously because we are troubled by the ways it excludes thinking, intra-action, and the emotional heft that womanist theorists of Color have contributed to similar constructs of analysis (Anzaldua 1999; hooks 1995; Lorde 2007), but whose conceptualizations are marginalized within poststuctural feminist frameworks (Pillow 2015). Nevertheless, we found diffractive analysis of data through multiple theoretical frames—including frames that caused tension—to be helpful in keeping "analysis and knowledge production on the move" (Mazzei 2014, 743).

Drawing from Villenas (2012), we viewed this process as an opportunity to re-center the possibility of "we" or "nosotras" in research. Re-centering the "we" of our work deepened our critical analyses of data, methodologies, and reporting that we previously viewed through a singular lens. Together, we created spaces to debate, deconstruct, and reconstruct analyses, and even to know when to walk away from research. Specifically, we took formerly complete products of our research (i.e., findings and positionality statements) and broke them apart in order to create new mosaics with fresh imaginations, possibilities, and truths formerly hidden or obscured. Importantly, this process also included reading ourselves as actors engaged in dialogue with marginalized communities in search for justice (Ladson-Billings 2015). By opening ourselves/our studies up to diffraction, and a destabilization of traditional routes to truth/the good of research, we began to discover *missing stories* as a way to open up new routes toward justice.

Methods

In this section, we provide an overview of the context and foci of our studies (Tables 1 and 2). During our three-year process, we engaged in collaborative discussion and investigation of troubling moments in our respective studies. From collaborative critique and diffractive analyses, we recognized dilemmas we shared and gained fresh insight into the multiple truths present within the stories we heard, and the stories we chose (not) to tell.

Table 1. Overview of Critical Ethnographic Studies, Joy and Kindel

Study	Study Focus and Setting	Reflective Questions	Methodological Tools
Teachers in Lincoln Elementary, located in a town in the U.S. south (Joy)	A study of how teachers made sense of race in a majority white southern elementary school.	a. How does my ascribed white racial identity vary between participants and how do participants' reading of my race impact the stories that are shared? b. How does my racial identity present particular dilemmas?	**Framework:** Critical ethnography **Data collection:** 15 semi-structured teacher interviews, 7 semi-structured interviews with community members, 18 months of fieldnotes, 2 small group interviews with teachers, Classroom observations and artifacts. **Data Analysis:** Initial and descriptive coding (Saldaña 2015); memo writing; combined narrative and thematic analysis; critical race and critical geography used as a conceptual framework to analyze themes.
Preservice Teacher Candidates in a literacy methods course in a large Midwestern city (Kindel)	An undergraduate literacy methods course for 20 preservice teacher candidates enrolled at an urban-focused institution in a large mid-western city in the United States. The course (third in a series of three interconnected literacy courses) met at a largely African American school/Aftercare Summer Camp program where teacher candidates worked with children for about 40 hours over a summer.	a. How I can navigate the racialized spaces I work within without reifying white dominant narratives—intentionally or not? b. How can I navigate a terrain where trust is minimal and the risk of white dominance is everywhere? c. How can I (as a white woman) use critical race theory without colonizing it?	**Framework:** Critical ethnography **Data collection:** Preservice teacher candidate artifacts, audio-taped class discussions, pre- and post-questionnaires on racial attitudes, classroom observations; Parent letters, discussions with camp personnel; Newspaper article written about the course/aftercare summer camp; daily field notes. **Data analysis:** Pattern analysis (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2013) using critical race theoretical framework to ground analysis.

Table 2. Overview of Critical Ethnographic Studies, Sophia and Candace

Study	Study Focus and Setting	Reflective Questions	Methodological Tools
Minoritized Youth Identity and Belonging in a Chicago Public School (Sophia)	A study that examined how minoritized youth make sense of identity and belonging in a community-school	a. How do we perform our identity(ies) as researchers in the field? b. How do we engage in research while simultaneously working with and across varied groups of stakeholders that increasingly envision themselves as sharing little common ground? c. How does one manage the contingent ethical and personal dilemmas that arise?	**Framework:** Critical ethnography **Data collection:** 40 youth interviews; 10 teacher interviews; Staff interviews (organizers and executive director) 1 principal interview **Data analysis:** Coding, memo writing, horizontal and vertical analysis
Youth Empowerment program for "at-risk" girls at a rural NC middle school (Candace)	An "almost study" of a youth mentoring program for middle school girls considered at risk. Meetings were held twice /month at the school site. Program mission was to provide a safe, fun, and caring space for girls to talk, share, and discuss issues important to their lives.	a. How does one navigate the ethical dilemmas that emerge when demands for research encroach upon a service-based, personalized space with vulnerable populations? b. What is the cost of not engaging in research with vulnerable populations?	**Framework:** Critical ethnography Critical Youth Empowerment Framework (Jennings et al. 2006), theory as healing (hooks 1994). **Data Collection:** Student personal communications, video of dialogue sessions, peer interviews, 'researcher' reflections and fieldnotes. **Data analysis:** Coding and thematic analysis of research memos and girls' video journals, letters, and written reflections

To analyze our data collectively, we relied on intensive group discussions about common challenges, awakenings, and possible blindspots we faced as we coded data. With the goal of working towards "dialogical intersubjectivity" (Saldaña 2015, 35), we engaged in ongoing dialogic analysis including multiple readings and analytical diffractions of each of our research stories via emails, phone calls, meetings and multiple drafts. The *missing stories* we share below were borne of this ongoing dialogue and diffractive analysis.

Messy Processes, Multifaceted Risks, and Multiple Roles

Missing stories encompass many possible syntactical translations—and can/should be used as a verb, adjective, and/or noun. Through analysis of our missing stories, we arrived at a new consciousness about our research *process*, the idea that sometimes in leaving one possible avenue of research, we find another that is more just (verb: missing as choosing absence, leaving, redirecting). In actively searching for what was missing in our work, we needed to view the work from new angles to see our stories in fresh and honorable ways (verb: missing as searching).

Conceptually, *missing stories* led us to a greater acceptance of the *risks* endemic to critical research: the need to honor participants' needs and desires and therefore forgo opportunities for traditional scholarship, sometimes read as academic failure (Adjective: missed stories, as opportunities we could not, or chose not to pursue). It also included deciphering the difference between moments too intimate to report and those too important not to make public. The former is a risk of not responding to the call for justice properly within moments of telling and hearing (Past tense verb: missed, an action we should/not have taken). The latter is a response to co-create stories that powerfully counter the status quo and oppressive systems (adjective: missing stories, as counter narratives that must be told). Finally, we recognize that *missing stories* are heard from the multiple **roles** we enter and exit (un)knowingly as mentors, teachers, friends, and researchers (Noun: Miss, as a proper noun, identities we embrace—those we seek and those assigned to us). Altogether, missing stories are stories of processes, risks, and roles resulting from tensions between truth and the good of justice-oriented critical ethnography.

The Missing Stories

The *missing stories* shared here through individual researcher vignettes, reveal our dissonance, challenges, roles, risks, pain, and process of (not) telling missing stories.

Joy:

What I Missed Along the Color Line

As a white woman with an interracial family and deep commitments to racial justice, I (Joy) am interested in how race and racism materialize in schools. My study took place over fourteen months in a majority white elementary school in the southern U.S., where I served in various roles for five years. I wanted to understand the meaning that race carried for teachers. Over the years, I established a friendship with Charlene[2], an experienced African American early elementary teacher. Through interviews and informal conversations, Charlene shared deeply personal and

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2. All names of people and places, other than our own, are pseudonyms.

professionally dangerous information with me. For example, in an interview Charlene voiced her rage about how she had been treated by white educators at Lincoln Elementary,

> White women might hate each other, but- they are going to stick together. I feel like they really don't know how people feel about them because it's just like they're in this La La Land…If I say we are friends, we are down. And if anyone comes to me and talks about you (Joy), I'm like no you're not going to talk about her. It takes a really special friend to cross that color line, for you to say we're really friends. And being in a place—when I started to be friends with you [four years ago], people came from nowhere and—you didn't see it, but I saw it. When they saw me talking to you, they wanted to know "What's going on? We need to know." The goal for me was divide and conquer. "If she doesn't have any friends she won't stay."

Charlene clarified that she did not include me in this generalization about white women saying, "Your soul isn't white. You're just the color white."

Throughout the study Charlene became increasingly upset by her daily experiences with racism at the school. Meanwhile, I had heard rumors that the principal was "trying to get rid of Charlene." As a novice researcher, I felt like I had to observe the conversations as they happened. As a friend, I felt like I had to remind teachers of Charlene's teaching ability and love for her students. In the end, Charlene resigned unexpectedly, without a goodbye. After she left, I remembered what she described as her frustrations, "not with the little people, but the big people," where she was "tired of fighting to be in a place that doesn't want [her]." In her final interview she had tears in her eyes when she said,

> It is 2012, and we still have racism. I keep hanging on because I have kids in my room, Rayquan, Marcus, and Tamara (African American students). I keep hanging on because of them, trying to finish my job with them. I feel like if I don't they will lose out and they won't be strong enough to stay here.

I wonder about those students too, and the impact of Charlene's absence on their schooling experiences. Still, I do not have complete clarity or closure about the reasons that she left, or where our friendship stands.

Making Sense of What I Missed

As a researcher, I wonder if I am partly to blame for her decision to leave, or if my perception of my researcher role held me back from *crossing the color line* after all. I have apprehensions about my ability to be the "special friend" that could "cross that color line" as Charlene described. Specifically, resisting the urge to be the "good white" (Thompson 2003), which is fraught with contradictions and self-promotion in the pursuit of "truth" in research. I was stuck between truth and solidarity on the side of justice.

These tensions send me to a place that Pillow and St. Pierre (2000) refer to as "the ruins," a messy space where power, identity, racism, and knowing are wrapped up in the lived places of the school. As I replay this story in my mind, I am again in the hallway, looking at Charlene's empty classroom, remembering her absence and my failure to cross the color line and stand in solidarity with her, wondering if my study of racism inadvertently perpetuated racism.

My memory takes me back to Charlene's explanation of the attacks on our friendship, "You didn't see it...The goal for me was divide and conquer." Remembering this insight casts a new light where I am able to see the silhouettes of my many blindspots: the conversations, meetings, and microaggressions (Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2011) that I missed in fleeting moments. The ruins of this hallway remind me that because of my many roles in the school, I was always part of the story as it unfolded. Originally I framed my role as co-performative witnessing (Madison 2011); and while that may be true, I also now see myself as within the story itself. A becoming with (Lather 2014) the action, the telling, and the hearing. Now, several years later, I understand this *becoming with* as akin to the book, *The Neverending Story* (Ende 1983) where a boy is reading a book, but midway through he realizes that he is not outside the tale, rather, his presence and actions are within the story itself.

This awareness propels me to reconsider Villenas' (2012) challenge to consider the us/other dichotomy of research. I hear Charlene's words again, "Your soul isn't white," a symbol of solidarity juxtaposed by the us/other divisions that came with how "white women stick together." I reconsider the ways I witnessed rumors and injustice. Injustice like the principal stating in front of our colleagues, "I'm working on getting rid of somebody"—where the "somebody" was understood to be Charlene. In this space of clarity, I both heard these stories and was present within them. Recognizing the never-ending possibilities of stories has changed my perspective on the hearing and telling process, and caused me to question what else I missed along the color line. I wonder if there are spaces where I can be a part of co-creating *missing stories* where the color lines drawn to demarcate racial divisions and perpetuate racism are not only discursively exposed, but materially deconstructed in a move toward justice.

In this shift toward justice, my larger research path has taken a turn toward joining in solidarity communities, with institutions and leaders who are actively pursuing justice, "just justice" as positive peace, unpacking privilege and naming the ways that we benefit from injustices (Ladson-Billings 2015). For me, this has resulted in a shift from understanding my work as "anti-racist" (Sleeter and Delgado Bernal 2004, 240), toward a more abstract concept with a steady anchor of justice. In this turn, I have left behind spaces where I see no hope of critical race praxis, or developing and then translating critical theoretical insights about race, culture, and law into operational ideas and language for anti-subordination practices (Yammamoto 1997). In my search for viable theories of change (Tuck 2015), I now realize the importance of listening from multiple angles, taking part in co-constructing *missing stories*, and exploring new avenues on the road to what is possible in educational practices and institutions when justice is the guiding force.

Kindel:

Missing Stories, Missing Images

As a white woman, literacy teacher educator, and critical researcher with family ties to the African American community, I (Kindel) struggle to interrogate whiteness in educational policies and practices through my work. This study, part of a two year investigation, examined the effects of framing teacher candidates' early literacy course content through critical race theory. It took place during a summer field-based literacy methods course with 20 university pre-service teachers (three African American, one Vietnamese, sixteen white). During the field-component of the course, we tutored young children (all African American and in grades K-2) participating in a

summer camp hosted by an organization called Neighborhood Builders and the children's elementary school, Pinkney Elementary. The *missing stories* and images I discuss arose because of a front-page newspaper article about the tutoring program, excerpted here:

> There has to be a reason they put up with this—all these children crowding on the floor with university teaching students, knees and elbows knocking. The summer program staff around them standing backs-against-the-wall as if trapped on narrow window ledges. And when the children claw their way upright to sing their song about how to pick out books—complete with hand and body motions—the place looks ready to burst. Many are poor. Many of their families' rent is subsidized. Most of them attend [Pinkney] Elementary School…where children were involved in far too many of the school's discipline incidents and poor test performances. [The camp's] children had accounted for about 90 percent of the suspensions at [Pinkney]. And organizers of the summer school thought they should assure the [university] students that if they were concerned about their safety at [camp], there would be security…[3]

The article portrayed the children as needing to be saved by the mostly white professor and students. The image selected for the front page, a young white woman reading with a five-year- old African American boy, reinscribes that portrayal.

The backstory: tipped off by a video of our tutoring, posted on the Neighborhood Builders website, Jefferson called me asking to do the story. He interviewed me over the phone, asking,

> The principal of Pinkney Elementary School told me that these kids had the most behavior problems during the school year, do you agree? Are you concerned about your safety when going to [the camp?] How far behind are the children in reading?[4]

I tried to convey that the children didn't seem to have behavior problems and, based on our initial assessments, did not seem 'behind' in reading.

After the article's publication, I received numerous laudatory messages from my university. At the same time, parents, children, and the *Neighborhood Builders* staff, were livid at the narrow portrayal of their camp. On the day of the article's release, we all gathered in the cafeteria to celebrate the last day of tutoring. The tension in the room was palpable. The director sat me down and, rightfully outraged, demanded: "Who told the reporter these things? Did you tell them these things, Dr. Nash?" I told her that I did, but that he took my words out of context. She talked about why she worked for *Neighborhood Builders*: "I work here because school failed my son. I work here because I want to give these children what my son never got." She charged, "That is the story that needs to be told."

Missing Stories, Missing Images: A Diffractive Analysis

Diffractively analyzing (Mazzei 2014) the missing stories/images through a critical whiteness frame (Gillborn 2005; hooks 1995; Lorde 2007; Vaught 2008) was like fracturing a ceramic plate and piecing the fragments back together to make a mosaic; something entirely different. The

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3. John Jefferson. "Elementary Students in KC Attend a Different Kind of Summer School." *Kansas City Star* (Kansas City, MO), July 8, 2013.
4. Paraphrased questions based on my notes from the interview.

plate—the newspaper article—told an essentialized, distorted white savior narrative. Indeed, I had "intra-act[ed] from within" (Jackson and Mazzei 2012, 134), naïvely following the reporter's truth-telling norms. I could not shape the narrative because I was trying to "use the master's tools…to dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 2007, 111). In allowing half-truths to be told, I neglected my ethical responsibility and reinforced a white supremacist status-quo. Fracturing the story, I see that as a critical white researcher working in communities of Color, it is/was my relational responsibility (Clandinin and Connelly 2000) to speak back to half-truths, and forefront counter-stories instead (Vaught 2008).

White supremacy is the norm in the United States, because "American society as we know it exists…because racial discrimination continues" (Hochshild 1984, 5). hooks (1995) discussed white supremacy as "the exploitation of black people and other people of color" where whites wish to "exercise control over our bodies and thoughts" (184-85). The ordinariness of white supremacy in the newspaper article is clear (Delgado 1989). Derogatory, animalistic terms describing "narrow ledges," children "clawing their way up," "knees and elbows knocking," combined with assertions about "discipline problems" and "poor test scores," and university students feeling "concerned with their safety," narrated a false dichotomy between poor/Black and savior/white. Solidifying this master-narrative, the reporter chose a front-page photo featuring a white woman university student and five-year old Black child (Jefferson 2013) to accompany the story, even though the class had a fair representation of students of Color. In the end, in response to objections about the story, the reporter wrote a lukewarm apology to parents and others concerned--an apology that did not address the article's missing pieces and images.

Here are the missing pieces of that article and backstory, fractured and reassembled—the truth—the mosaic, the *missing stories*, written by a caregiver of the child featured in the front page photo:

> There were some gross assumptions in this article. The writer assumed that all the campers are poor and misbehaved children. This program is ran by [96% African-American and Hispanic workers] none of whom were shown. I go there daily and have never been informed of any behavior issues by the Neighborhood Builders staff. The Neighborhood Builders staff accompany the children on weekly field trips, skating, swimming, train ride, Chiefs sports lab, and the library. So no matter how narrow the ledge, they have shown up daily and stood tall to create an awesome environment…All of the children are clean and well-kept when showing up in the morning. [Jefferson] describes the children as if they are little animals crawling around on the floor and clawing to a stance. What was the purpose of this description? Then the comment about being living in [neighboring apartment complex] and being poor. Help me understand the purpose behind this? Yes, many may come from working middle class family (now considered the working poor) but that was not portrayed either. The…parents that I see when dropping off my grandson are working parents that take their children to the program for their children to experience a structured summer program close to home.

Sophia:

Who are you, Miss?

The title of this missing story points to the complexity of racial and ethnic identity in my (Sophia's) study. While conducting research in Chicago, I explored low-income, minoritized (McCarty 2002) youth perceptions of identity and belonging. Two dilemmas emerged during this research: first, I struggled to articulate my racial/ethnic identity and thus understand positionality upon entering the field as a doctoral student. Second, I withheld my mixed racial background from Latino youth as a strategy to gain insider status. As the astute youth asked powerful questions such as "Who are you, Miss?," my journey through the dilemmas of figuring out who I was as "Miss" began.

I did not anticipate the power dynamics within the community-school partnership. As I gained entry to O'Donnell through the guidance of the executive director of Redwood Park Council, Quinn, I felt an allegiance to him. However, I learned the ways that his staff struggled with him as a "white male who doesn't always get the needs of the community," as one organizer said. I asked Quinn about his relationships with the all-Latin@ staff. He explained, "You have to listen, Sophia. You or I can't be the only ones speaking." I learned that Quinn saw me as part of what Villenas (2012) called the nos/otros of qualitative inquiry, suggesting divisions between groups rather than a "we" of a community. As a researcher, I was positioned as part of the "You/I" with Quinn, which was different from the "they" that made up his staff. Divisions persisted, and I was often in the middle trying to figure out where I belonged. The Latin@ organizers, who were my link to the youth, did not trust me initially due to my positioning alongside Quinn, who they sarcastically referred to as "jefe."

I was also perceived as white by white school leadership, the "You or I," because of my academic status. Simultaneously, white leadership viewed me as "able to understand where the kids come from" (Principal, November 2012). The principal wanted to use my Latina-ness to help him gain access to the students, saying, "You can help me find out what's going on inside my school." I felt deeply conflicted about both the perceptions and expectations of my identity and the fact that if I stayed silent, I would fail to answer the question: Who are you Miss? Ultimately, what was critical was the truth I told the youth.

Although I have a Cuban father who died when I was too young to remember, I grew up with a white mother in a wealthy white community despite our working class background. I felt used when I perceived that the white principal wanted to leverage my Latina-ness to gain information about youth. My Latina-ness was somewhat false because I grew up in different circumstances than the youth and community organizers, who perceived me as white. One organizer persistently commented on my "not being from the neighborhood," positioning me as an outsider. I felt the need to prove my Latina-ness.

These tensions demand that critical ethnographers consider their relationships with multiple stakeholders. I faced moments when I had to figure out with whom to align myself and why. Stich, Cipollone, Nikischer and Weis (2012), raised ethical questions related to researcher identity such as, "how do we engage in research while simultaneously working with stakeholders […] and managing the contingent ethical and personal dilemmas that arise" (463). Negotiating identity in the field—helped me to reflect on my own racial and ethnic identity struggles between the us/them dichotomy, and how best to build relationships with the youth.

"You're White, Right?"

The movement from being an outsider—"Who are you Miss?"—to becoming, "Sophia, our older friend," is documented below:

> V: You're white, right? Why do you come here every day? We don't mean to be rude. You seem white. I don't know; most Latina girls are...they are ratchet [slutty] or they defend their gang-banger boyfriends. You have like, I don't know, the way you carry yourself. It's just different. You don't seem like a Latina. You're not like us. (Field notes, December 2012)

I reflected on this exchange as a moment when I felt that what I said to the youth mattered or would/could determine the level of trust I built with them. I knew they were just trying to figure out why I was there to "study" them, suspecting I was different.

I struggled with the moments where access into the social worlds of the youth required my willingness to reveal pieces of myself. An important part of relationship-building involved me sharing that I had experienced classism growing up in a wealthy white community, and yet I did not face the same educational inequities present in Chicago. I was honest about my access to the various forms of capital that often are aligned with school success. In our conversations, youth appreciated our similarities and differences, and most importantly, they seemed to not care if I was white or Latina. They began to see me as, "Sophia, our older friend," knowing I was there to tell their stories. They accepted me in spite of my whiteness and came to trust me.

Although I saw myself as aligned with the youth, I also critiqued how I did not stand up to the ways in which the racialized logic (Lewis 2003) of the school reproduced inequity through tracking Latino@ students. I remained distant from the white leadership, and did not have the language at the time to fully unpack the racialized structure of the school (Omi and Winant 2014). Instead, I found it more productive to talk *with* the youth to learn about the racial inequities and "tiers of education in the same school" (Interview with Sophia, June 26, 2013). I offered counter-narratives of youth experiences, focusing on positive youth identities, rather than the racialized, deficit discourses that were reproduced in their school (Rodriguez 2015). Thus, part of the "truth" I wanted to tell related to youth perceptions of school inequalities.

Youth perceptions of my race/ethnicity initially mattered. As issues of race and racism become more rampant across the country, I now realize that as a critical researcher, I have a responsibility to engage in and name the racialized structures that continue to oppress minoritized youth *with* the youth I research regardless of my fears. While I remain committed to the voices of those in communities that I am part of, I have found more safety in naming racism through sociological theories of race as I now have the language and experience of witnessing patterns of racial injustice across schools in the country. The moments when I chose not to critically expose truths about deficit discourses and teachers' racialized ideologies about Latin@ youth abilities or racism in the community-school were to me the missing stories. The things I missed as a researcher related to my own uncertainty about identity and anxieties about belonging with/to whom in the field. I see my future work as a call to advance racial justice by seeking out more stories and not missing the opportunity to share those stories.

Candace:

Becoming Miss

"When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid" (Lorde 1997, 13).

I (Candace) claim the margins as the space for my work. Claiming the margins as a site for critical work and a sense of belonging were particularly important to my survival as an untenured African American faculty member in a predominantly white institution. I inhabited this space as a borderland where productive resistance and collective action found in the everyday theorizing of everyday people—the small story—became electric. In listening to the small stories of youth, I learned that these wondrous liminal spaces can be deeply personal, fraught with uncertainty and the fragility of lived experience. Although rich with the possibility for qualitative inquiry and meaningful scholarship, the vulnerability of youth participants and the inherent risk they take in sharing their truths remind me that perhaps not all stories should be the stuff of research. This illuminates my dilemma in both claiming the margins as sites for critical ethnographic work and resisting the draw of research when I, in communion with my participants, deem stories too personal for research.

My entry into the field of "almost research" occurred in my third year as faculty—a critical year for tenure track faculty seeking reappointment. As a new scholar, I was in search of community, places of belonging, and sites for research. An opportunity emerged when I served as a guest speaker for sixth graders at a racially diverse Title I middle school. The principal, a soft-spoken African American woman with an understated power and deep respect and affection for her students, stayed for my talk. She asked me to mentor a small group of seventh and eighth grade girls, who, in her words were "at risk of promise."[5] I was concerned that a mentoring relationship might make future research problematic, but I did not mention research. Not yet.

Messy Processes in Liminal Spaces

The work was straightforward—make a promise to kids for whom too many had been broken and show up ready to engage, challenge, and care every time. I entered a half empty room and looked into the questioning eyes of the girls who would be my toughest teachers, reluctant students, beautiful daughters. These adolescent girls, awash in an externally imposed stigma of failure and language of *at-risk,* met me at the door, wrapped me in the hot, fast talk, and eager demands of youth, and anchored me to this place. Ever the lover of the small story, I hoped this would become a space of connection and belonging where my research and commitment to community might flourish.

Early on, they challenged and pushed against my privileged presence, occasionally poking fun at the proper way I talked: "You don't talk Black, Miss." That they thought I didn't "act Black" was clear in their questions and the ways they, sometimes lovingly, sometimes not, teased me about my "white people" interests (hiking). I also didn't "think Black" specifically when it came to the issue of fighting. One feisty seventh grader remarked more than once, "Miss, you telling me different stuff than my Mama. She say, if somebody put they hands on me, I fight or else people will think you're weak." During one of our meetings, a brilliant eighth grader who did not trust

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5. The initial program included four eighth grade girls (one Latino, two White, and one African American) who graduated. The next year and a half of the program was comprised of ten African American seventh graders.

my presence or the reason for the group questioned the authenticity of my Blackness when I professed my ignorance of a Black comedian's role in a movie. She remarked, "A real Black person would know who Kevin Hart is." [6] I was taken aback. In a space where I had experienced belonging, I was still very much an outsider. My positionality as a privileged, educated Black woman among young girls who questioned my ability to see them was complicated by attempting to make sense of what research might look like in these entangled spaces.

The girls always called me "Miss" although they knew I was a college professor. This began as an expression of distance—of wariness, and a test of my intentions and authenticity—but eventually, Miss became a term of endearment, an expression of trust and respect. Even the tone of their voices changed. Later, when they called me Miss, it was a demonstration of care—a girl standing close to me, leaning against my shoulder, or smiling into my eyes. Yes, I was an educated woman with privilege—but in those moments, Miss became an avenue of sisterhood, a confidence shared, advice given, care found. In the "thick of things" (St. Pierre 2008), we had finally reached a point where we were able to develop a mission: to provide a safe, fun, and caring space for girls to talk, share, and discuss issues important to their lives. Our goal: to increase girls' sense of self-worth and improve girls' perspectives toward education. The girls named themselves Diamond Girls, and our meetings became more fluid and relaxed, a place where "hope and struggle live on together" (Glass 2014, 105) through the shared stories of dreams, family, abandonment, homelessness, racism, and boys. In the knowing and being with one another, I believed the best kind of research becomes possible. St. Pierre (2008) affirms this being in the "thick of things." She wrote:

> …our face-to-face interactions with people make our work especially valid, we are present in our research, in the thick of things, talking with and observing our participants…extended time in the field-being there and being there longer-makes our work even more valid. (321)

Because "[q]ualitative inquiry is not distant; it's live and in person; it happens right now…" (St. Pierre 2008, 321), I shared my own stories of loss and marginalization—my search for belonging, to model (and practice) the fruitful risk in telling one's truth. In reluctant bursts, the girls shared small stories: what it felt like to be the victim and the perpetrator of hurtful rumors, abuse, lost fathers, tough mothers, ailing grandparents, teachers who dismissed them, and school suspensions. Each meeting provided sacred space for them to write down their truths, and they always had the choice to share, or not. Eventually, they did this unbidden: slipping scraps of notebook paper into my bag, or rushing back before I left the building to press their thoughts into my open hand. Sometimes they brought new girls, saying, "Miss, she needs you. She has problems Miss." These girls didn't join our group, but they were heard in that moment, and they too would greet me with a hug or a shout—"Hi Miss!" across the busy hallway.

Colleagues encouraged me to pursue research with a persistence that implied I was wasting my time otherwise. Admittedly, it seemed an efficient way to blend service with research, but when I approached the Diamond Girls with the idea, they responded, "Who's gonna read this, Miss?" "Ooh! My Mama would beat my butt if she knew I said that [told her business], Miss!" There was also the (mis)perception that writing was no longer just about small stories. Despite my explanations that any research would be their truths, the girls were reluctant to forego what they saw as the freedom to talk about their own theorized lives (hooks 1994), and the power to share messages that unfolded in their own time and in their own way.

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6. The student was referring to Kevin Hart, a popular African American comedian.

With each visit, I felt a subtle nag of the hegemonic selfishness of a turn towards research, and the partial, flawed glimpse of reality that such research may impose (Newsom 2001). My research heart said, yes, find a way to center these girls' voices—let them tell their own stories! Surely, the interactional thickness of our time together also validates the rich work we have done together. Yet, the time spent carving out a space of shared connection with these vulnerable girl-warriors to reveal the psychological heft of their burdens and depth of their dreams, was not a site for research. I read my decision to forego research as a partial failure, but it was also a reading of the moment anew. This choice, where something was lost, something was "missed" also made room for missing as seeking/finding/creating new avenues for critical race praxis (Yamamoto 1997); this was sacred ground.

Diffractive Readings of Missing Stories

In this section, we pivot around our diffractive readings of the *missing stories* described above. The term *missing stories* originated during our discussions of Candace's Diamond Girls, who referred to her as "Miss"—a term used to distance, then endear, and finally to symbolize trust and respect. As we discussed this term, and Candace's struggles with her "almost research," the idea of what was "missing" opened up an alternative route to understanding the struggles that we all shared. For Candace, her resolve that her role with the Diamond Girls was indeed "Miss" (not Doctor, not professor) made space for moments that would have likely been lost under the gaze of formal research. While we did not know what to call it at the time, our discussions about Candace's multiple roles and her dissonance on how to proceed in her work with the Diamond Girls helped each of us to engage in diffractive readings of our own *missing stories*, and reimagine our roles as critical ethnographers.

We offer a graphic representation (Figure 1) to demonstrate how missing stories emerged in multiple ways—as roles, risks, and processes—and how we viewed each through a lens of justice and good research. Diffractive readings allowed us to see multiple truths, translations, and possibilities present within stories. We also discovered new ways to analyze data, reflect on self-as-researcher, and better envision future research projects.
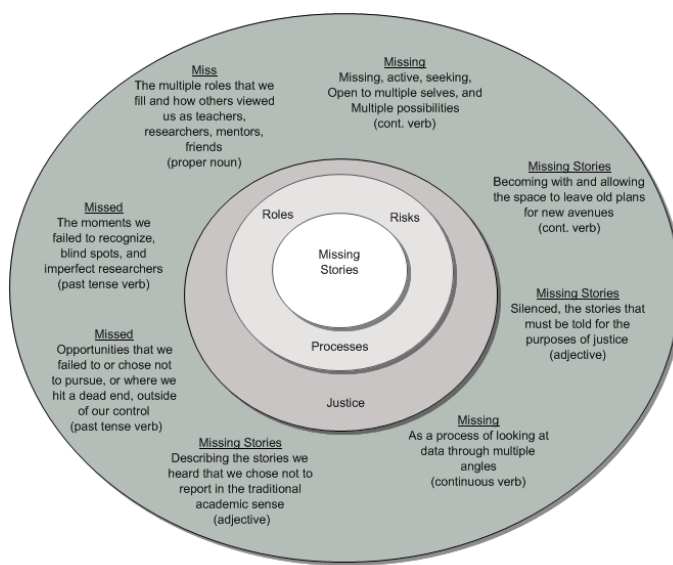

Figure 1. Missing Stories Graphic Representation. Courtesy of Leah Panther, University of Missouri, Kansas City.

Multiple and Contradictory Roles

Each vignette demonstrates the multiple and contradictory roles we played in our research. Sophia's story told of how as both insider and outsider, youth and educators viewed her ethnic identity and cultural knowledge disparately, which affected how she could/did access the community's trust. Her identity and role as researcher were questioned: "Who are you Miss?" This question had implications for access and opportunity in research spaces, but the answer was complex. The assumptions behind the identities Sophia did (not) occupy informed other people's judgments about her role in particular spaces (Gallagher 2000). In a related way, Charlene's affirmation that Joy's "soul is not white" juxtaposed by Joy's retrospective grief over the role that she may have played in Charlene's resignation, created a reflective space where the "color lines" were blurry, and the impossibility of playing the good white (Thompson 2003) was brought to bear. Similarly, both Kindel and Candace were conflicted in their projects: Kindel, in her role as a community partner and university spokesperson, and Candace, in her role as an educational researcher overshadowed by the Diamond Girls' need for a mentor. Our close connections to communities and ethical obligations to accept our multiple roles and settle into unplanned processes were a part of "becoming with" (Lather 2014, 5) and "intra-acting from within" (Jackson and Mazzei 2012, 114) spaces where we aimed to center justice.

The Risks of *Missing Stories*

Missing stories sometimes resulted in missed opportunities in/of research. We encountered key decision-makers who thwarted our best efforts, or we failed to pursue opportunities that may have led to interesting action or data. A key examples is Candace's project, as missed research. Her decision not to research the Diamond Girls was in part an act of resistance not to 'betray' their small stories, the living theory of the Diamonds; and partly a result of her inexperience to navigate and reformulate a research project that would honor the girls' voices. Stuck in the liminal space of risk, Candace chose to forgo potentially powerful research. In all of our projects, there are stories that will be heard only by the researcher because in those moments the interconnections of the *we* in research necessitated taking risks to honor intimate stories by not pursing or reporting them. These untold, hidden and protected *missing stories*, serve as a catalyst in our new level of understanding as well. Honoring the hearts opened to us through stories is a requirement of good research.

***Missing Stories* as a Process**

Finally, somewhere between roles and risks was the idea that *missing stories* include questions related to fleeting moments and unknowable, potential failures. How should Sophia have responded to questions about her ethnic and racial identity? How could Kindel have interrupted the ripple effects of the disparaging newspaper article? How should Joy have responded to the rumors about Charlene? Was Candace's conclusion not to conduct formal research with the Diamond Girls the best choice? While some readers might not have encountered these questions as stuck places, we analyze these refusals (Tuck and McKenzie 2014) and missteps to expand our knowledge about the process of choosing "the good" over a singular truth—as a move toward justice.

Lessons Learned from *Missing Stories*

We found that sometimes *missing stories* came at a cost of time unaccounted for in academic expectations that did not make room for unpublished scholarship. *Missing stories* also required personal risks where the work was emotional and uncomfortable. Still these *missing stories* beckon us forward since they are not constituted in words, rather by our responsibility to be a part of re-imagining and doing justice work.

At this point in the journey, we find ourselves at a place of "radical openness…a profound edge" (hooks 1995, 206) with regard to our roles, risks, and processes. In finding our way out of the stuck places of this messy work, the group process has been invaluable. As Freire (1994) reminds, "Hope is rooted in (wo)men's incompletion, from which they move out in constant search—a search which can be carried out only in communion with others" (72). We assert that finding, participating in, and remaining in dialogue with critical communities is essential to the work of critical ethnographers. This mosaic we created by diffractively analyzing our *missing stories,* enhanced our ability to rethink previous analyses of and entanglements with/in data through new theoretical lenses. Because we each came at our work from various regions, identities, and theoretical leanings, it was neither a smooth nor a linear process, but the collective reading of our work was vital to our work as critical ethnographers.

It is important to state that, in the end, we never arrived at consensus about if we contributed enough to communities with whom we are in dialogue. Yet, it is in this not knowing, from a space of imbalance and tension that critical ethnographers can engage new truths that contribute to justice work. In these spaces, we must continually choose to embrace the dissonance of belonging, the pursuit of doing good research, and the call to honor *missing stories* in all their iterations.

We assert that critical methodologists must transcend the question: Does this constitute scholarship? We must carefully consider moments where leaving a project does not mean departing from justice, in fact it may be justice work. We have offered these diffractive readings of our *missing stories* with/in and across our experiences in hope of advancing *the good* work of critical ethnographers. Introducing the concept of *missing stories* as messy processes, multifaceted risks, and multiple roles taken up by critical ethnographers, we embrace the concept that "a researcher cannot tease herself apart from the world because she is part of and results from the ongoing intra-action of the world" (Roulston and Shelton 2015, 394). To this end, we hope to advance the conversation about when and where untold stories, academic failures, new possibilities, multiple tellings, and counter stories are the most valuable and best versions of the truths derived from engaging in research measured by justice.

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